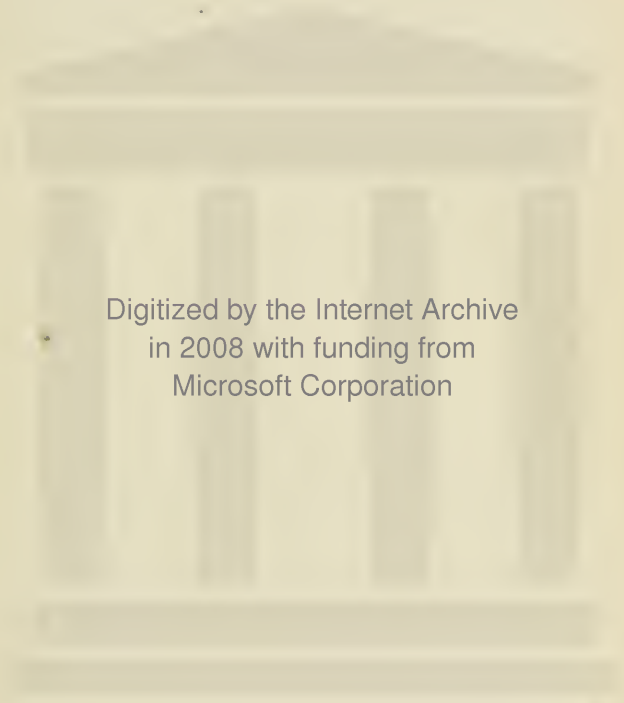

A COMPARATIVE

HISTORY OF RELIGIONS:

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Part I.

ANCIENT SCRIPTURES.

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PREFACE.

In the work, of which this is the first part, it is proposed to exhibit a general view of all religions in their relations to one another. Without presuming to treat so vast a subject exhaustively, the writer believes that a simple statement and classification of the doctrines and practices of religion, and the facts of their historical development, as far as known, will help towards a scientific comprehension of the whole. At present, its materials are an utter chaos, in which superstition and unbelief alike find refuge, and the wildest assertions on both sides elude exposure. To compare and arrange what we know partly, enables us to know it better, and is some advance towards understanding what would otherwise remain unknown. Truth is always served by that work, however brief or feeble, which goes to clear up the order of facts.

The method adopted for this treatise is, first to present the common conditions, and principal modifying circumstances of religion in the life of man; secondly, to reach as near as possible to the original creed of mankind, not by speculating about it, but by actual examination of the most ancient scrip-

tures; thirdly, to pursue the comparative history of the religions, to which those scriptures belong, through their various recorded changes; fourthly, to make a complete classification of all religions, ancient and modern, as far as information can be obtained, and fifthly, to determine, if possible, the essential principles inherent more or less in all, and wherein the best religion differs from the rest.

For all this, the author does not pretend to have adequate learning of his own; but feels that he is better supplied with material in the works of others. By the researches of such men as Hodgson, Hardy, and Burnouf concerning Buddhism; of Spiegel and Haug in Parsism; of Wilson and Müller in Brahmanism; of Rawlinson, Layard, and Botta in Assyrian antiquities; of Wilkinson, Lepsius, and Brugsch in those of Egypt; of Legge and Chalmers in Chinese, and of many more, in these and other fields, a better supply has been furnished, than any one mind could ever discover for itself. Indeed the breadth of the subject is so great, that it would be utterly impossible for one man to handle it by digging his material for himself out of all the mines. Classification and comparison of ascertained results make up the proper work of the ensuing treatise. If the science of religion cannot yet be erected, in all its details, it will still be of service to the cause to do something towards marking out the ground-plan, on which the future structure is to stand.

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CHAPTER I.

I.

MAN AS A RELIGIOUS BEING.

THE only superior to whom man looks as entitled to his homage and service is God. Yet something in his nature, needed to qualify for that service, is felt to be lacking. He fails to accomplish it to his own satisfaction. His moral faculties, his intellect and sense of obligation demand it, and at the same time assert that the demand is never fully met. Man apprehends the existence of God, namely that there is a God, recognizes his obligation to live in obedience to the will of God; but yet has no true discerning of spiritual things. The grand duty of human life, felt as such in all nations, is to know God truly, and serve Him acceptably. And yet nowhere have men ever made such attainments as to satisfy themselves on that head. Worship is an expression of a deep sense of that deficiency, an application for pardon and reconciliation with offended Deity. The universality of worship is the grandest and most sweeping of all confessions of sin: and the endless variety of the notions entertained of God, the broadest demonstration

of general error upon the basis of some fundamental truth.

The idea of God could never be created by sensational experience. For the infinite is something entirely different from any combination or modification of things finite. Man could not grow into the capacity of apprehending God. He must have had it by creation to begin with, just as truly as he needed affection to feel with and eyes to see with. But whether the knowledge of an existing God was an attainment made in the natural exercise of that faculty, or communicated by revelation, is a fair question ; as well as whether that original conception was of God as one or as more than one. The answer, if attainable, must come not from speculation but history. It is the single object of the present treatise to present briefly some facts, the fruit of recent research, bearing upon the early state of human thinking about God and his worship.

Man is everywhere sinful, and yet everywhere religion interpenetrates his character. It belongs to him in his highest culture and his lowest degradation. Even where he neglects it, he is not without it; and where he has corrupted it most, he is held in the most crushing bondage by it. It lifts him up, or it drags him down, according as he holds it in purity, or confounds it with error. Its effect upon the good is benign; upon the bad, terrific; but upon all it has its effect. Religion modifies all forms of society, and is itself modified by them. No right understanding of it can be had without taking into view the natural conditions of human existence; and any handling of society, which should

overlook religion, would be radically defective. Right direction of the religious affections is essential to the highest culture, as their debasement is an invariable element of barbarism. Of all the religions of the earth which is the best? What is it that makes it best? Does it stand alone, or do all contain some parts of it? Does any religion contain less good than harm? Or is any existing religion better than none? Or can human society do without religion if it should think expedient? Such are questions of profound importance.

Man is distinguished above all other inhabitants of earth by the variety and extraordinary activity of his vital powers. Notwithstanding the frailty of his body and his ever-recurring errors and vices, there is about him what suggests the thought of Deity. Other created beings, within the range of his habitation, submit to him; he, in his proper place, recognizes allegiance to God alone. Mistakes as to where God is to be found; what he requires, or what he allows, may mislead him, and his own purposes may turn his mind away from God; but, out of his own race, none save God does he recognize as having a right to his obedience. Other animals have a place in history only through him; his relations are immediate with the Creator. Constituted thereby a religious being, religion enters into all the stages of his history. It is a fundamental principle, and the highest honor of his being. Its purity is his elevation, its decline his fall, and its corruption his debasement, and to neglect it is to forfeit his crown.

Earth with her varied resources exists the same for all who dwell upon her surface, but man alone shapes

those resources to his own convenience. A rich soil, a healthy climate are important conditions of national prosperity; but human energy has often transferred the advantage to the barren glebe, and triumphed over the sources of miasma. Attica was made to surpass even Egypt in the honors of civilization; and Latium to maintain a larger population than any of the more salubrious tracts of the Mediterranean coast. No nation ever fails from lack of material resources until its own energies begin to flag. If it finds them not in the land of its occupancy, it will find them elsewhere, making even natural disadvantages the pivot on which to move. It will pursue them beyond the sea, it will penetrate to the bowels of the earth to discover them, it will ransack the treasures of air and of ocean, it will devise new fabrics, it will create resources. The people of Tyre and Sidon needed only ground to stand upon. With but a strip of arable land between the mountains and the sea, they became one of the wealthiest nations of antiquity—a people whose merchants were princes. The land of his abode deeply colors the web of man's life, but his own energy has most to do with the manufacture of the fabric. This singular power of bringing together and modifying natural products, to the extent in many cases of creating for them new forms, is a feature of character not to be left out of view in an estimate of his religious obligations.

Progressive improvement in respect to the same things is not to be expected of all ages or nations. Each of the workmen, amid much that is common, has his own vocation. And some have done their work

so well, that it does not need further development in the same direction. The achievement of every epoch of genuine progress is something different from that of any one preceding, either a step forward on an old route, or the opening of a new.

Individual man is related to mankind by organic bonds, as containing in himself all that is essential to the race, and being comprehended in it. Mankind is one, not merely as a series is one, not as an aggregate, but as an organic body. What belongs essentially and by nature to one man, belongs to all men: for example, the erect stature, the number and relative disposal of the various parts of his body, the organs and power of speech, and of weeping and laughing, the delicate and versatile, yet forceful hand, the face and its capacity for expression, the smooth and sensitive skin, are features which belong to no other creature, but belong to all branches of mankind. And if a single individual lacks any of them, it is not as belonging to a different species, but simply as a defective member. There is that about him and in him which recognizes the deficiency. As an animal man stands at the head of the scale. But his superiority in that respect is as nothing compared with what he possesses in mind. Upon a basis of instinct and sagacity only superior, and in some points not superior, to the lower animals, he enjoys a class of powers which have no parallel in them. In the discrimination of right and wrong, in the perception of beauty and its opposite, in the power and impulse to conceive of and care for a future life, and to take hold upon the idea of

eternal duration, and of progressive improvement, the capacity to conceive of God, and of relations and duties to God, far more than through the organism of the body, is the eminence and unity of mankind declared. And in all its features, as an organism, human nature is the same in all generations, from the earliest recorded to the present. In the personages of the most ancient history we recognize ourselves. The very first man was the type and representative of the race. Myriads of his descendants might differ from him and from one another in the degree and proportion of their constituent parts; but all the parts essential to a man belonged to him. And none of his descendants, by natural generation, could be anything, the germ of which was not contained in him. The religion which meets truly and fully the wants of one human soul has a message of comfort to all. Multitudes may be deceived, and knowing no better may be glad to put up with the imperfect, and of the imperfect there may be great diversity; but the perfect for one must be perfect for all.

II.

NECESSITY.

In his relations to the world man is surrounded by serious limitations of his freedom. Of these some are implied in our physical constitution, in a fatal defect of our moral nature, and the brevity of individual life. Others similar in kind lie in the fact that the growth of the race is not a simple development, like that of a single

stalk of corn, but proceeds by the succession, overlapping and complication of innumerable series, or cycles of various extent and duration. What may have been the original design for man remaining in a state of holiness, whether endless existence upon earth, and nationalities immortal as their constituents, we cannot tell; but certainly, as things now are, and have always been, since History first took up her tale, there is nothing springing out of the conditions of our earthly existence, which has not its maturity and its end. To expect a nation to live forever would be as inconsistent with well-known facts, as for a man to expect immunity from death. The whole aggregate of our earthly existence as well as its parts is mortal. And whether from constitutional causes or from violence, it is only by certain cycles that, so far, the race has accomplished its progress.

In this respect any healthy man is a type of the whole. He has his childhood, youth, maturity, and old age, and then passes away. But, according to the natural order, others have reached their youth and others their childhood ere he has passed his maturity, so that when he dies the race is not fewer than when he began life; but is still maintaining its existence, in childhood, youth, maturity, old age simultaneously. The life of the individual is limited. The life of the race goes on.

In the course of history, new families successively emerge from obscurity, while the older disappear. A particular house, the descendants of a common father, acquire in the course of time a certain degree of power, and increase in numbers and influence in the circle to

which they belong. For a few generations, or perhaps for only one, they hold their position, after which they begin to diminish, and gradually pass out of notice. But before they had reached their prime, others had been preparing to take their place. A nation rises from insignificance, in the course of ages, acquires weight of numbers, wealth, power, dominion. For a time it retains that position, and then begins to diminish, its energy declines, its dominions drop off, its influence among nations becomes impaired, and after a long process of deterioration, it sinks entirely out of notice. But it has been followed by successors, who were young and daring rivals ere it had reached its prime.

Again, when we take in a wider view and consider ethnic groups, each, it may be, comprehending a number of nations, contemporaneous and sequent, the same cycle appears of growth, maturity, and decline; the growth of one group running parallel with the decline of another, its maturity with the youth of a third, and its own decline with the maturity of the same.

Thus, the whole progress of the race advances by cycles, in numbers great according to their several smallness, all after the type of the individual man, and existing not merely consecutively, but also together in all stages of progress, like the fibres in a twisted rope. The new elements ever blending with the old, before displacing them, like particles in a living body, form together with them one great whole, which is mankind, and in which all the various stages of life exist together and continually.

The race itself, perhaps, is revolving through its

vast cycle upon all those of which it consists; and if left to ran its course, might reach a point, beyond which it must begin to decline, and ultimately come to an end of its temporal career. But neither in the case of the individual, nation, nor family is the cycle always permitted to complete itself. Very often it is corrupted, diseased, or terminated by violence before its natural close.

Man's free action is accordingly to some degree limited, and historically ascertained by the cycle to which he belongs. Certain features of the Israelite at once marked and confined his character. The Greek could not take upon him the peculiar gifts of the Egyptian, nor the Roman those of the Greek, much as they might admire and copy their attainments.

And then into all this system, at every part, enter new elements from accidents, virtues, vices, and so forth, many of which, with their consequences, become hereditary, and still further limit the uncertainty of human action.

Much universal truth of human history is also to be obtained from contemplating man in relation to the place of his abode. Imperceptibly to himself, except upon reflection, but most cogently, is his life affected by the topography of the country in which he resides, as it may be a land of mountains, of plains, of rivers, of seacoast, favored with rains, or subjected to a cloudless sun.

A river, in the spontaneous working of human life, is one of the most powerful bonds of social union. Its banks commonly furnish motives to similar employ-

ments on both sides, engendering similarity of views and opinions, and leading to a homogeneous culture. Its two great rivers were the heart of Assyria. The Nile was to Egypt the one condition of its being habitable. China is simply the country of the great system of the eastward-flowing rivers of Asia. The Indus and the Ganges occupy a similar place in the history of India. A river may, as it often does, divide kingdoms; but it unites civilization, and dictates similar practices and habits of thinking to the dwellers upon both its banks. Nor is the rule confined to navigable rivers. Upon the Jordan and its tributaries rose the strength and beauty of Israel. The Halys was the centre of Asia Minor, and the might of Lydia rested on the Hermus.

Society which rises by a river, or, in other words, a well-watered country, when homogeneous and unconstrained, is marked by certain features proper to itself. It is based upon agriculture and permanent settlement. The conditions are soon constituted under which the nation increases rapidly in wealth and numbers and becomes invincible to its neighbors who live in a different manner. In such countries have the most complete systems of subordination, sacerdotal and civil, taken their beginning, and reached their maturity. Caste, in the sense of a distinction of races or of religious observances, is most likely to be brought about by conquest; but caste or rank, in the sense of prescriptive assignment to specific occupations, is due to the spontaneous division of a people growing up homogeneously on an agricultural basis.

Ranks, once fully formed and enforced, constitute a moral imprisonment. Things assume a stationary or routine character, in which they may long remain, with every appearance of prosperity and power. But meaning soon abandons a prescribed routine. Change is dangerous; but without change, death ensues. Ultimately lack of individual enterprise exsiccates the national substance. Routine itself loses its power, outside forms become hollow, like a tree beginning to decay at heart. An indifferent and servile population, earnest in nothing but their superstitions, careless under whom they practise the trades, in which their lives are swallowed up, make listless defence of the state. Some ambitious or needy invader falls upon it, and finds the long accumulated wealth an easy prey. Such, in brief, is the career of Egypt, Babylonia, India, and some other similarly favored seats of history.

But many a habitation of man, like the table-lands of Arabia and Iran, are destitute of great rivers, and consist chiefly of vast expanses of barren sands, with only patches of verdue and arable soil. In those dreary wastes it is the lack of water which creates the desolation. A spring gushes up through the sand, around it spreads the richest vegetation, and the little stream that issues from it carries a belt of verdure into the surrounding desert, until itself is drunk up by the sun. In some places a ridge of hills gives birth to a number of springs, and shelters their rivulets until they unite in a stream of such magnitude as to hold its fertilizing course until reaching some land-locked valley, which it is unable to overflow by rea-

son of evaporation, it terminates in a salt-lake. In some instances such streams amount to large rivers; but thereby also they belong to a different head. Oases, large and small, are found in those deserts to a great number. A large population supports itself among them, migrating, as pasture fails in one, to seek it in another, and in some finding arable soil enough to supply their few and simple wants.

In such a country civilization is never highly elaborated or complex; but it may exist in some of its most attractive features. Very few are its attainments; but no other style of society holds its own so long. And no other has contributed so much to the purity and dignity of religion.

All migratory tribes do not belong to the same degree of rudeness or of culture. Those who live by tilling the soil, like the primitive settlers of Greece and Germany, without such a tenure of the land they till as to secure them in more than the produce of a year, liable to be expelled at any moment by a braver or more numerous enemy, must be confined to the scantiest elements of order, inasmuch as they have always to hold themselves in readiness to remove, without being able to carry the best of their substance with them. Always beginning, and frequently constrained to forego the progress made, and recommence once more, their endless labor, like that of Sysiphus, would be their only gain, were it not in the nature of things that such a state of society must, in the course of time, come to an end.

The lowest variety is that which depends for sus-

tenance upon the fortune of hunting. Property is confined to articles which can be carried with facility from place to place: and the amount of toil necessary to provide by precarious means for daily food leaves little room for higher cares. Religion in such hands is usually degraded to the level of a dream or a fetich.

The migratory farmer, in the course of time, settles down upon some lands, which he has become strong enough to defend, or which, by superior force, he is constrained to cultivate. He is in a transition state, which, in the nature of its own progress, tends to improvement. The migratory hunter, as long as game holds out, is hopelessly a savage. And as that supply cannot be permanent, nor adequate to the wants of a large population, he is ultimately constrained to abandon that way of life, and seek more reliable resources, or perishes together with the precarious support on which he depends. If it is the lowest on the scale, it is also that by which the smallest population can live. On the other hand, the migratory herdsman naturally occupies lands which are fit for little other use, and when his numbers become too great, the surplus overflows to other countries, his property being neither fixed in the soil, nor confined to the haunts of game, while his own course, in his own land, continues the same from age to age. Of all classes of migratory nations, it is to the pastoral alone that civilization, in any degree, can be properly said to belong. We behold it illustrated, in its finest type, in the early Hebrew Patriarchs.

Far different from all these is that class of nations

which have their dwelling by the sea. The fixed hereditary habits, which, in an agricultural country, ramify into castes, are here broken up, or modified by customs imported from abroad. Prejudices are counteracted by knowledge of the manners, customs, and laws of other nations, and the views of the people are enlarged by comparison. Improvements are adopted or suggested by diversified observation. Enterprise promotes enterprise, property rapidly changes hands, and liberality and progress become the chief features of society. Instead of the smooth polish of the high agricultural refinement, a sharp, hasty directness of manner prevails, and inevitably to a greater or less extent a mercinary spirit, with a keen and crafty discrimination; but at the same time great readiness of outlay upon whatever presents a reasonable expectation of profit. Fortunes rapidly acquired stimulate to mental activity, as all classes perceive the way open to riches by ingenuity and diligence. Every art that promises gain is thereby cultivated with the utmost zeal; and as wealth increases, science and mental culture unfold their purer treasures, and meet the more intelligent appreciation. All the tendencies of commercial society are towards the equalization of rights among its citizens. Its civilization contains the most numerous elements, the greatest variety, while its faults, whatever they are, become open and notorious. The diversity of religious opinions brought together in such depots provides the natural conditions of free thinking. To this head belong also those states, which occupying a central position in relation

to different countries or continents, become depots of commerce by land.

Commerce and manufactures are the liberating occupations of human life—not necessarily liberalizing, that depends upon other principles, but liberating. They liberate from bondage to the soil of any particular land. The nomade has the advantage over all other migratory nations, who becomes the merchant of the dry lands. The routes of commerce over the desert are in some cases almost as permanent as the paths of the sea, and have often planted seats of a high civilization in their course. Thus have flourishing cities sprung up in the midst of the wilderness. At the points where two or more routes intersect, or where they terminate in some different mode of transportation, depots inevitably arise. At such a point arms were needed to protect the goods during their deposit, and anciently temples arose to the gods worshipped by the merchants in the habit of meeting there, or by the residents collected there in the service of trade. Every great depot of ancient oriental commerce was also a celebrated seat of worship of some eminently popular deity. Such were Damascus and Meroë, and Thebes, and Ammonium, and Bozrah, and Palmyra.

The history of religion carries us into the heart of all those varieties of human life; and takes much of its own coloring from them. Among the Hebrews, religion, when its order was that of a family, planted itself in the house of a nomade prince. When as a national faith and ceremonial it was to be simply conservative of truth, the agricultural form of society

was assumed. And when publication and liberalization became its work, the Hebrew people were scattered abroad, and turned into the channels of trade; and their sacred books were transferred to the language of the commercial Greeks. Similar was the patriarchal religion of the nomade fathers of the Hindus on the dry lands of Iran, and similar the conservative ceremonial of their descendants on the plains of India. And in recent times when a spiritual religion freely and flexibly adapts itself to every turn in the life of man, the chief agency in its propagation and defense has been committed to the great commercial nations, which command the trade of the oceans.

Civil government, though the outgrowth of human nature, is not entirely of human option. That a people, living together freely, choose a government is of their volition, and yet is as positively certain as it is that water will obey gravitation. In human society there is that which demands government of one form or another, and grows into it, as language into grammatical order. Men may choose what form their government shall assume; but are not free to do without any. And even the form is less a matter of conscious choice than men commonly believe. Circumstances usually determine it. Most nations could give little account of that under which they live. With all their wild freedom, the tribes of the desert have never been able to choose other than one general form of government. The patriarchal is the only government suited to a tribe. And the country, which forbids a consolidation of tribes, renders that form perpetual. In

the valley of a great river, the government, in the natural growth of society, is either a development of the patriarchal into absolute monarchy as in China; or an aristocracy springing from the first owners of the land, or from the heads of the different families which first settled on it, consolidating into a monarchy as in Egypt. A republic may arise out of the conditions of agricultural life, but its native home is the mart of commerce. In by far the greater number of cases, government is not a matter of national choice in any sense, but either of force or natural circumstances accumulating from generation to generation. And even where a certain form has been deliberately adopted, the education and experience, which prepared the people for that act, will be found, on examination into it, to have been long, multifarious, and beyond the control of the generation by whom the choice was made.

Such are some of the agencies whereby human freedom is modified and limited. In vain shall we aspire to any powers beyond those which belong to our race; and in the exercise of those, we inherit many an unfortunate bias. Every man belongs to some particular cycle of ethnic growth, to some particular nation and family, and he inhabits some particular region of the material earth, at once the heir and the subject of a form of government and habits of society which are not submitted to his choice. Nothing short of the power of God can make a man other than he is by generation, by hereditary institutions, and by the force of the material earth upon him.

Still further, man's freedom is limited by the air which he breathes, by the climate to which his constitution is adapted, by the food which he eats, and the clothing he wears. He can maintain his existence in the Arctic regions, or on the equinoctial line; but with a greater weight of care, and reaches the best condition of his powers only in the temperate zones.

Not without reason has religion, in every land and in all ages, so solemnly urged the lessons of an imperious necessity.

Is man, then, a mere slave of the circumstances and conditions of his temporal existence, bound hand and foot in fetters of the material world? On the contrary, even situated as he is, where it seems as if he must be overwhelmed and subjected, as the lower animals, there are forces at work within him, and on his behalf, which go far to liberate him from the bondage of Necessity, or to make Necessity itself as good as freedom to him.

III.

FREEDOM.

In the scale of animate creation, the Creator manifests himself to greater and greater length, through the ascending degrees of instincts, of intuitions, and of rationality. The lower animals he holds under strict control. Their action is God's volition exercised in them, under a bond of necessity from which they are never free. To others he grants freedom to some extent in the use

of means, but no capacity to choose any other than the determinate end; to others, in addition thereto, some choice in the exercise of affection, but no power to rise above objects of sense. Man is put at the head of that scale, possessing the inheritance of instincts in common with other animals, but endowed with a larger measure of freedom of intellect and affection to the extent of being able to control his instincts, to apprehend their ends, to perceive that it is the design of his Creator that he should control them, and with a degree of command over his affections to direct them, in greater or less degree, towards objects recommended by the reason. Thus far, man is the freest of animals; but still upon a common basis of instincts, feelings, and perceptions with the rest—the most complete, the noblest, and the ruling animal; but nothing more.

But at this crowning point of animal perfection, a higher style of existence begins. A class of faculties here declare themselves, of which not the slightest movement appears in the lower creatures. The intuition of supersensuous things, and the power of handling them rationally, and of coming to rational conclusions about them, are the birthright of man alone. But that divine gift implies freedom of thought, and that of higher degree than the former and of more comprehensive range.

This internal freedom of man is demonstrated in the work of his hands. Looking upon the scenes of certain periods of human history, we find nature transformed in many respects, and turned to the service of human device. Houses are built; cities have arisen; roads are

constructed and continued over broad rivers, as well as hewn out of mountains; ponderous stones are built into arches, and suspended in the air in domes; forests are cut down, and the surface of the earth, reduced to culture, is constrained to bear that produce, which suits the convenience of man; trees are planted for certain effect upon the landscape, or for the production of such fruit as man prefers; they are even altered in their nature, to improve their fruit and render it more palatable and nutritious; mills are constructed, and the unchanging powers of nature compelled to drive them. Even rivers and the naturally impassable barrier of the sea are turned into the most convenient means of travel and transportation of merchandise. Men build their dwellings on the ocean, and sweep in floating palaces around the globe. The secret places of nature are ransacked, and her hidden treasures brought forth to light and set to work in the service of man. Gold and silver are made to circulate as the representatives of material value; iron, and brass, and coal to do his drudgery, and supply his comfort. Nay, invisible agencies of nature are searched out and discovered, and made to execute the designs and bear the messages of man.

Such are the evidences of human freedom, and of how it asserts itself in the midst of the realms of necessity. And they are not rare, nor recondite, but occur in ten thousand instances, pertaining to long by-gone as well as to present times. They cover the surface of every civilized country, open and declared as are the works of God, their variety being such as

to exclude the hypothesis that they are the offspring of instinct, like the cell of the bee, or the dam of the beaver, or that they are produced by any invariable and necessary law. If the variety of the works of nature points to a free and intelligent author, in the same way, though not to the same extent, do the various works and designs of man evince the freedom of the being who designed and executed them. I look abroad over a great city, over a cultivated country, over the civilized world, and see that men are free. Because nothing short of free action can account for the endless variety of the phenomena.

Whatever the difference between the works of nature and those of man, it is not such as to affect this analogy. Variety in nature appears in endless multiplicity of creations; the unity of the Creator, in the presence of procreative power, and the same style of complete and perfect finish of every class of creatures in its place and kind. It speaks the inexhaustible resources of one author, almighty, all-wise, and possessed of all the springs of life and being. Variety in human works is the impress not of a creator, but of a free agent upon existing material in accordance with general laws, and manifesting everywhere more or less imperfection, vacillation, and weakness of execution as compared with design. Nature is the offspring of one will. No discordant systems of legislation derange the motions of the planets, conflict in the field of vegetation, or leave the marks of organic contradiction in the animal kingdom. Wherever the hand of man has not interposed, perfect harmony and regularity of order

evinces the purpose of one will, graduates progress, resolves ends into beginnings, and "beautifully mingles life and death." It is an ever-progressive and yet unchangeable will. The motions of the heavenly bodies can be calculated to the precision of a moment, and foretold for thousands of years. What they now are, they have been in all recorded time. Geological periods, previous to the existence of man, may have seen more rapid succession of events; but the operation of the same laws, which determine geological action still. And of the ocean the language of poetry is, with little modification, the language of science:

"Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now."

In human history, although we have to deal with the action of a variable will, there are also great principles which may be counted on as invariable. For the variable will is inclosed in and, in some fundamental respects, made conformable to the invariable will. It establishes no necessary laws, and from one generation to another, vacillates greatly in the use of existing laws; still, the unity as well as the freedom of the human agent is abundantly evinced even in its defects and vacillation. The difference between historic and unhistoric nations is, in this respect, not of kind, but of degree. And the better that human life is, the freer it becomes, and at the same time the more conformable to the universal order. Its ideal perfection is conformity to natural laws, without subserviency to them, such compliance with them as to turn them to account, a free action co-operating with the invariable

will, producing effects, which natural law alone would not produce, and yet entirely obedient to it, the work of a free, intelligent, fellow-laborer, not a slave.

Common life is full of apparent contradictions or inconsistencies. The same occurs in religion: and must, necessarily, in true religion. Man is free, and yet bound in chains of necessity. He feels himself under obligation to do, what he holds himself able to do, and yet cannot will to do. So in Scripture he is addressed as free to accept the offers of salvation, and at the same time as unable to do so without divine aid, as being Christ's servant, bought with his price, and yet Christ's freeman and fellow heir, as a son of God. And he knows it true of himself that he desires to rise in dominion over the creatures, and yet that he is prone to sink into compliance with them.

It appears from both life and revelation that we belong to a system the whole of which we do not comprehend, and that we are, in some way, discordant with it and our own original constitution. None has yet succeeded in harmonizing all the apparent discords of human life and of its contact with nature. But through this tangled wilderness the track most clearly cut by human freedom is the path of civilization.

IV.

PROGRESS AND DECLINE.

The tendency of human improvement is always towards greater and increasing mastery over nature; that

is, towards a greater power and breadth of freedom, while the course of human degeneracy is always that of submission lower and lower to material and animal forces. Improvement appears in increasing dominion over inanimate and animal nature: that is, in the manifested power of the spiritual being. Degeneracy is its debility, its failure to assert and to maintain its dominion. High culture is the fruit of human freedom exercized with energy and right principle. Barbarism is indolent submission to external circumstances. There is a sense, in which the savage is freer than the civilized; but it is a very limited one. For although he rambles at will through the forest, he is the helpless slave of many natural agencies which the civilized man commands. To the savage, a great river is an impassable boundary, or every time he crosses it he has to adopt the same rude and dangerous means of transport. Civilized man throws a bridge over it, and crosses it upon dry ground, or builds a comfortable boat upon it, and makes of it the smoothest of highways. The savage may select where he chooses a place for his wigwam, which he transports to another place with almost as much facility as he changes his mind. The civilized man shapes, or makes the ground to suit him, and constrains all surrounding nature to minister to his wants. The current of the divine laws in nature is ever flowing on whether we put our hands to them or not, seasons run their never-ceasing round, vegetation goes on regularly through its various stages, animal life steadily obeys the laws of its being, good and evil, pain and pleasure, occur and succeed each other, accord-

ing to an order no less inflexible; day and night, heat and cold, and the ten thousand conjunctions of all these things furnish the circumstances of human life, which lie beyond the power of human genius to create or to prevent. But in the midst of all, has God placed man under command to take part with himself in ruling them. The external world consists of materials and agencies put in motion and kept in motion by God. Man is to avail himself of them to accomplish the work to which he is assigned. If he takes hold of them and modifies them to his design, or lays his plans to meet and receive the effect of their action, then do they become, in some degree, his servants, and their effects expressive of him. If he does not, they go on in their own way, and have nothing human about them. If man, instead of using, merely follows them, they do not express him; he sinks down and loses himself in them.

Plants grow wild and bear their fruit in the woods without culture. Savages live upon that fruit where they find it, and lodge in tents, huts, or caverns ready made by geological process. As far as they are concerned, earth receives no impress of human character. Man sinks to follow the leading of inanimate things, loses himself in nature, in the routine of vegetation, and brute forces of animal life. A cultivated farm, on the contrary, is not a mere expression of the powers of nature. It speaks also of man. He has not created a single one of the laws operating in it; but he has put his hand to them all, in the way of directing them, or of preparing objects for them to act upon. He can

neither create a tree, nor the fertile juices of the soil, but by fostering both, and addressing the action of the one to the other, and the combination of one thing with another, he obtains a fruit as much superior to its native kind as if it were a new creation. That improved fruit is not only addressed to human wants, it also bears the stamp of human ingenuity and labor. Nothing about the wild buffalo implies the existence of man. It is otherwise with the ox trained to the yoke, or fattened for the shambles. The natural landscape has nothing to tell of man until art has disposed its elements in accordance with human design. It is thus alone that the material world becomes ours, in the sense of improving for our comfort and conforming to our tastes.

The changes which take place among a community of indolent and barbarous tribes are, to a great extent, untrained nature. In common language, such people are said to take things as they come; that is, the circumstances of their lives are scantly human. And should all men carry out that principle, there would be no more trace of human progress upon earth than there is among wild animals: we should have no history.

It is possible to live too exclusively in art and too far away from nature; but the true and highest condition of man is among the arts of his own creating. It is in the working together of the human will with the divine. Here lies the field of history. History is the record of this realm of human freedom: whose constituent law was announced when: "God said, Let

us make man in our own image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

In losing that spiritual life, which is most directly of God, man lost the true spirit of the ruler, and the natural power to sustain himself above the forces of earth and as master over them. The natural tendency of sinful man is to sink into bondage to the animal propensities of his own nature, and thence to other fetters. True religion goes to liberate him from that abject submission to natural forces and bald necessity, as well as from moral corruption. And civilization is the progressive work of man in the use of all the means for establishing and maintaining the true symmetry of his own being, and his dominion over the creatures. Accordingly, the more highly and truly civilized part of mankind has always proved superior in power, no matter how far inferior in numbers, to all the rest of the world. And that superiority holds as long as the progressive spirit of their civilization remains in activity.

The frequency with which we hear of the natural progress and development of nations has, perhaps unintentionally, given currency to an erroneous notion on the subject. To speak of the development of a people from a state of barbarism into refinement, without some corrective explanation, implies that the progress is wholly native. And popularly it is accepted as true that nations begin with being savages, and

grow up by force of internal powers to the highest refinement, as naturally as children grow to be men. True, there is an analogy between the two. Children, by force of nature, will become men. But they need education in order to become learned men and men of culture. So does society need education, in order to civilization. That is a state to which a nation reaches not alone. Aptness to learn and to improve upon the lessons received undoubtedly mark some nations more than others; and from the force, activity or delicacy of certain national capacities, greater breadth, utility or beauty, have been given to certain elements of civil and social culture: but history makes record of no barbarous nation as having lifted itself to the level of civilized life, by its own unaided strength. Follow the genealogy of civilization as Luke follows that of Jesus, and, like him, you will terminate the series in God. True civilization, like the culture of the individual has been perpetuated in the earth only by learning.

Without detaining attention upon the half-culture of China and India, or the less than half of Mexico and Peru, of which it is not easy to determine whether it was a process of improvement or of degeneracy, we enjoy, in the line of historical record, a tolerably clear account of the course of events in those nations, which from the earliest time, have successively borne the highest honors of refinement. That record presents distinctly three great periods of civilization, of which two have been completed and have successively passed away, and the third is now in progress. The first

extended from the earliest recorded settlements until the decline of the Persian empire; the second, from the rise of Hellenic superiority until the decline of the Roman empire, and the third is that which began with the revival of learning in Western Europe; but has taken its distinctive features only in recent time.

Each of the two former periods is subdivided—the first into three sections, the second into two. Of these the earliest was marked by the characteristics of the Hamitic race, and saw its best estate in Babylon, Assyria, Syria, and Egypt until about fifteen hundred years before Christ; and was brought to a close of its superiority by the decline of primitive taste in Egypt and the overthrow or extermination of the previously dominant race elsewhere. It did not then come to an end, but underwent a revolution, whereby it was revived in receiving new and important elements at Semitic hands, under which the second section flourished.

The earliest and highest Semitic culture appeared among the Hebrews and Syrians, and reached its prime between ten and twelve centuries before Christ. It lasted in that connection only a few generations longer, when the superiority was yielded to the later Assyrian and Babylonian.

When all the nations of Hamitic and Semitic civilization broke down, in the sixth century before Christ, a new race appeared upon the scene. The Medes and Persians, with their strong arms and inflexible laws, took possession, bound the disintegrating nations together in one dominion with themselves, and sustained their wan-

ing energies, until finally all went down under the Macedonian invasion. Then ensued the dark ages of the oriental world in the overthrow of one type of civilization by another, which did not succeed in filling its place.

In the second great period we distinguish two sections, the Greek, which is the basis, and the Greco-Roman; the former characterized by eminence in art and in philosophical acumen; the latter in the practical wisdom of government. And what the Medo-Persian had been to the dissolving oriental system, was the Roman empire to the Hellenic world, when breaking into similar disintegration. Having gathered the nations of which it consisted into one dominion by the force of arms, it held them together in the girdle of a masterly legislation for five hundred years, and after losing hold of the West, fell back to Greece again; and there maintained its existence for a thousand years longer.

Corresponding to these periods, and resembling them in some very important features, the history of religion presents us with certain changes in the methods of revelation and worship. These changes, as far as concerns the nations now mentioned, can be stated in few words.

The earliest style of religion as of civil government was that which belonged to the family, and in which the head of the family united in himself all authority, the method of grace was that of personal and direct communion with God, with the simplest rites of sacrifice. Few, perhaps, were the families in which that method was observed in its purity; but the whole culture of the time was shaped in a corresponding mold. The kings of

Salem, of Gerar, and of Egypt were patriarchal sovereigns, and sought the favor of God by means similar in kind to those which Abraham employed at God's command. The whole system of Egyptian government proceeded upon the presumption that the king stood in the relation of a father to his people, and enjoyed familiar access to God as a son to his father. Such was the case in all the nations that we read of belonging to that first period. By the patriarchal style and method alone was all the progress made that was made. The temporal benefits of the system continued to be pursued, and artificial attempts multiplied to increase and extend them, while the sacred examplar became burdened with many corruptions.

The Hyksos period in Egypt, the Hebrew bondage there, marks the decline of the patriarchal system. True, it long afterwards maintained its superiority before the world, and there are states in which it lingers still; but a new and superior style of culture was then about to be introduced, which, when matured, would forbid the patriarchal the highest place.

After a long silence, history opened again in a new condition of the world. Kings had become despots, and the simple religion of the former time was now swallowed up in a multitude of ceremonies, gloomy, oppressive, or immoral, and the living God removed to a distance, or shut out from sight by the intervention of idolatrous symbols. A new revelation appeared, addressed to the character and fashions and evils of the time, with an elaborate ceremonial and laws involving the constitution of a new style of social and civil

order. A model nation was formed without a mortal king, thereby leaving out the element which formed the very centre of the previous system. Accordingly, there could be no king-priest or king-prophet. God was now to be accepted as a present king, to be inquired of through an oracle of permanent presence and awful secrecy, by a lawfully appointed hierophant, and worshipped by a legal priesthood with observances of a state religion.

Long had that new method to struggle with the weight of existing corruption, the power and example of the priest-kings on every side, and the prevailing tendencies to interpose some divine being between man and God; but when its triumph came, although in its purity it never was accepted but for a short time by few, it exhibited a new style of civilization as well as of religion. Of nations which rose to eminence in culture in the ancient world after that time, the most successful were those who observed a similar legal and symbolical worship, sustained by a learned priesthood, and inquired of God at oracular places, with rites of solemn mystery. It was the ecclesiastical system of the Greco-Roman world in its Hellenic prime, without the original spirit, it is true, but still the system. But when that dispensation had been fulfilled, and the seat of its oracle at Jerusalem destroyed, Hellenic culture had also begun to decline, and legal religion to lose its hold upon the convictions of men.

Christianity appeared, and with unprecedented rapidity established itself in the faith of the civilized world, taking the place of all predecessors. It was needed, a

faith upon which earnest men could confidently rely in the time that was to ensue,—the most radical and protracted revolution which the world ever beheld. Nothing but a lofty spiritual religion taking powerful hold of the hearts of men, independently of legal forms, yet not to be defeated by the addition of them, could have survived that terrible ordeal of a thousand years. Christianity herself did not come through unscathed; but the older religions died. And when civilization next emerged in her own proper attire of science and of art, of modest morals, of social comfort, and of personal safety, it was no longer after the manner of the Greek or Roman, of the Egyptian or Hebrew, but in a style so radically new that it long failed to be recognized for what it was. Only as its benign and beautifying effects came out in the experience of society, was it felt that the world had actually come into the enjoyment of a new civilization, unlike anything that had been previously known as such. It arose where nobody looked for it; but just where it should have been looked for, from the heart of that gospel, which had been the life of the heroism of fifteen hundred years, which, in the long struggle, had maintained its adherents so triumphantly, and which now emerging from the burdens it had submitted to bear, manifested itself to the world as liberated and progressive in the development proper to itself. A religion of unparalleled freedom, unfettered by legal observances, without sacrifices, without a temple, with no necessary dependence upon any civil government, with no mysterious shrine of an oracle, without a separate priesthood; recognizing only one Mediator, who is also God, and

opening the way equally to every worshipper to approach God, as a child to his father, teaching the equality of all its disciples, and the sublime truth that God is an everywhere present spirit, who loves the world, and that they, who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth; in other words, a free gospel has created a new civilization after its own likeness. Our success or failure in our time will depend upon our understanding of this fact and the use we make of it. A comparative view of the religions of the world will go far to demonstrate the importance of the gospel in all those matters which pertain to the best temporal as well as spiritual interests of man.

In all the changes now mentioned, it is to be observed that the historic progress never comes to a stop. The seeds of one type of culture are planted while the preceding is in its prime; and the transfer of superiority, though generally across a period of comparative disorder, is by organic process. And the interval is not cessation, but only more occult growth, working in and harmonizing elements, either discordant, or not hitherto subjected to culture. And secondly, the progress never goes back to take up and revivify forms once become obsolete—an attempt often made by admiring art, but invariably rejected by real life. The lessons of the past are our guides for the future, but that, by enabling us well to understand and take up consistently the direction of the present.

It belongs to civilized man to govern the world. The best right to govern rests in him who lives most in accordance with the will of God. True government is the

power of righteousness. But man's degeneracy is to sell his birthright for lower things, to sink into compliance with animal and material forces. He fails to govern himself, his appetites and his passions; yields to them and thereby becomes their slave. The further he proceeds in sin the feebler he becomes, until, if not prevented by some higher power, he sinks into barbarism, which is just passive submission to nature. Consequently, religion lies at the very root of human power. It is impossible to write a true history of civilization truly without writing it in a religious spirit.

Through all the fetters of necessity by which he is bound, and over and above all the cycles by which his mortal existence is limited, there is in man a higher power, which, properly instructed and sustained, continues to advance to higher and still higher stages of excellence. Even under the bondage of the material is evinced the energy and progressive growth of the immortal. And there is operating upon the immortal being that which revolves in no cycle, which passes through no change, except that of progressive clearness and fulness of revelation, and that is the evolution of spiritual religion.

CHAPTER II.

AREA OF THE ANCIENT WORLD.

THAT region, to which the first great period of civilization belonged, is one well defined by natural boundaries. Upon the north they are constituted by the Black sea, the Caucasian mountains, the northern shores of the Caspian and Aral seas, and the deserts of Russian Tartary; on the east, by the mountains which separate it from the central plateau of Asia, part of the Hindu Cush, and part of the Himalayas, as far as the Sutledge, and thence by the dry country, which is largely desert, on the east of that river, and of the Indus, to the sea; on the south, by the Arabian sea, the gulf of Aden, and southern borders of Ethiopia; on the west, by the African desert, the Mediterranean and Egean seas, the Hellespont, Propontis, and Bosphorus.

A certain geographical symmetry belongs to the region thus bounded, all its parts holding such relations as the parts of one body hold to that body and to one another. It consists of three great parts. Through the centre, running the whole length, and forming the largest portion, is a broad belt of more or less elevated table land, bordered and interspersed with mountain-ranges, from the Egean sea to the Indus, taking in the

whole breadth of Asia Minor, Armenia, Upper Mesopotamia, Assyria, Persia, Media, and the modern Cabul, Afghanistan, and Beloochistan. On either side of this great belt of hill-country lies a vast plain bounded externally by the valley of a large and navigable river, and partly intersected by two inland seas. On the south-western side, the plain is that which comprehends the deserts of Arabia and the Nile country, and the two seas which intersect it, are the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. The north-eastern plain is that which comprehends the greater part of Independent Tartary, and has for its extremity the valley of the Jaxartes; and the seas which intersect it, are the Caspian and Aral.

Into each of these plains runs a great and fertilizing system of rivers, connecting it with the central highlands. On the south-west that system consists of the Tigris and Euphrates with their tributaries, descending from the highest group of mountains in the west; on the north-east, the Oxus and its tributaries, which gather their waters from the highest part of the eastern ranges, where they rise towards the central plateau of Asia.

The whole region is thus at once symmetrical and varied, bound together by great natural bands. Both to the east and west its southern extremity rests upon the valley of a great river, which feeds a belt of arable land through a desert to the sea. On the east, the Indus, on the west, the Nile, present a remarkable similarity in the nature of their course, their magnitude, the countries through which they flow, and the antiquity of human history connected with them: the Ethiopia of the Nile corresponding to the Punjab of the Indus,

and the lower course of the Indus being through a desert, only not so completely waste as that which borders the valley of the Nile.

Again, there is a striking analogy, mostly inverse, between its eastern and western regions. The hill-country of Afghanistan, with its river terminating in a dead sea, corresponds in both position and character to Syria, lying towards the upper waters of the Oxus, and the deserts on the lower Indus and in Central Persia, as Syria lies towards the upper Euphrates and the deserts on the lower Nile, and in northern Arabia; while between the Oxus and Indus it is backed by a mass of almost impassable mountains, as Syria by the Mediterranean sea. In this latter respect inverse also is the analogy. For while the mountains were an impediment to egress towards the east, the Mediterranean lay like an open highway leading to exploration of the West. To the north, the plains on the Jaxartes opened up a way into northern and north-eastern Asia and northern Europe, as the valley of the Halys allured towards the coasts of the Black and Egean seas and of southern Europe; while the riches of the Punjab formed the attraction, which took emigrants across the intervening mountains into southern Asia; as those of the Nile were the stepping-stones across the desert into central and southern Africa.

But the greater prosperity of western emigration may be partly accounted for by the fact that a vast mountain-belt, backed by the dreary table-land of central Asia corresponded, on the east, to the position of the Mediterranean, Egean, and Black seas with the beautiful

islands and peninsulas, and innumerable harbors of Europe, on the west. On the direct east, there was nothing apparently to attract, and everything to forbid emigration. On the west, every facility for commerce, and further on, broad alluvial plains invited to agriculture and permanent settlement. To the south-east and to the north-west, the progress of population was similar.

Limited by natural boundaries on every side, and symmetrical within itself, this favored region was still far from being monotonous, or lacking in variety of resources. From the sandy plains of Arabia and Central Iran to the fertile valleys of Syria and of Asia Minor; from the broad paths of its great rivers to the mountain ranges of Taurus; and from the cold of the more elevated parts of Armenia to the warmth of Babylon and of Egypt, great diversity of earth and climate were found within its bounds. At the same time it was happily spared the more disagreeable extremes. Lying, with little exception, within the southern part of the north temperate zone, its climate, though varied, was yet moderated within those degrees most congenial to the human constitution. And all its diversities of soil and level were far short of those extremes, to which many other countries of the habitable globe are subjected. Even the deserts of Arabia, so far from being wholly desert, suffice to maintain a large and powerful population.

Subdivided by natural lines and capabilities into a variety of countries, the seats of many degrees of human progress, it yet contained no serious obstacle to inter

communication of its inhabitants, and its parts were marked by certain common features, which affected with a family resemblance the style of life belonging to the whole.

Upon that stage was represented the first act of the world's history. Its style of society was, in the main, that which belongs to a land of rivers; but also within its bounds the radical elements of all that has since been developed on a larger scale elsewhere first saw the light; and first received a place upon now existing records. It was the earliest historical abode of all the three historical branches of mankind—as far as history knows, their primitive home. Moreover, in the direction of that region do all nations, which have retained any accounts of their early existence, refer their origin. Nations of the further east, as of India and of China, look to the west as the home of their primal fathers; those of the south, as of Ethiopia, look to the north, those of the north, to the south, and those of the west of the old continents look to the east. And the table-lands of Iran, the countries on the lower Tigris and Euphrates, and Middle Egypt present special claims to antiquity of human residence.

In ancient times the whole of this vast region was not equally civilized. That part of it which lies between the mountains of Kurdistan, on the east, and the Mediterranean sea and western borders of Egypt on the west, is properly and peculiarly to be called the area of ancient civilization. It is also that part which is most peculiarly oriental. Strange as it may seem, in passing further east, we find ourselves among a population which

is less oriental. The ethnic relations of Persia, Cabul, and Afghanistan are with Europe as intimately as with India, and more intimately than with Syria and Egypt. Especially was this the case in ancient times. The original homestead of European nations was in the eastern part of the area above described. On the other hand, the inhabitants of its south-western portion have always kept themselves separate from western nations and from foreign intermixture, from both east and west, with great jealousy. The idea that they were a peculiar people, exalted above all others in point of wisdom and culture, made them, in the early ages of history, exclusive and opposed to the recognition of any kindred with nations beyond their own bounds. And although the notion and pride of superiority was seriously modified in later times, the inheritance of descent from that ancient greatness is held among them as a ground of distinction still. Their style of society, their linguistic system and the contour of their countenances all go to distinguish its inhabitants from the people of Persia, in the same way as from those of Europe. Much did that part of the world communicate to both east and west; but there are also striking features, which it never could transfer. Its people are properly oriental. It is that region to which the records of Hebrew Scripture belong. Their narrative commences, after the flood, with the plain of Babylon and the uplands eastward from it, then passes to Mesopotamia, then to Canaan, then to Egypt, back to Canaan, then to Egypt again. It is thence transferred to the Arabian desert, then to Canaan, then to Assyria and Babylonia, and finally back to Ca-

naan, and the principal scenes over which it moves are Babylon, Canaan, Egypt, and the desert of Arabia Petræa. The area to which the early books of the Hindus and Persians belong, and where lie the scenes of ancient European mythology, is the eastern plateau, between the mountains of Kurdistan and the Indus. The settlement of India is from that quarter by emigrations through the Punjab. The dawn of European history rises on the shores of the Egean sea; but the mass of European population arrive from the same eastern plateau, by a long and circuitous route, following the attractions of rich pasturage on the Oxus and Jaxartes, and the boundless plains of southern Russia and the lower Danube. A similar movement to the east by way of the Jaxartes seems to have peopled central and eastern Asia. The Chinese entered upon the rich land which they possess, coming in from the north-west by way of the upper part of the Hoang-Ho.

The languages spoken in that region were representative of the great linguistic systems of the world. Diagonally through its length, in the heart of its mountain country, from the Egean to India, lay a belt of various dialects of the Aryan class, broadest at its extremities, and interspersed towards the middle with intruders from both sides. On the north, the endlessly diversified Turanian prevailed; and on the south-west, the so-called Semitic were flourishing in the superiority of their civilization; the former branching off by the wild migrations of pastoral tribes towards the centre and whole east of Asia; and the latter, by similar means towards the interior of Africa. The central, or Aryan group,

confined on all other sides, pushed its pioneer progress into the west, to the heart of Europe and northern shores of the Mediterranean sea, and on the south-east into India.

Hence it appears that the best place in which to take a comparative view of religion in its primitive forms, must be within the limits of this area of the ancient world, if ancient information on the subject can be there obtained.

CHAPTER III.

I.

COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE MOST ANCIENT SOURCES.

Religion in some of those countries, in the course of ages, underwent very great changes, many of which have left little or no record of how they took place. If we are to reach a just conclusion on the subject, it must be by comparing contemporaneous authorities at one epoch with those of another: and with that view must classify our sources, as well as we can, chronologically.

In that part of the world's history, which preceded the supremacy of Greece, there is apparently an extreme self-contradiction. From one point of view, the people are presented as enormously wicked; their debasing and persisting vices such that in several cases, God, it is said, employed miraculous or specially ordained means to remove them out of his sight. From another, they appear to have been eminently religious, to have enjoyed divine favors such as we never hear of among ourselves, and to have done in the work of religion what no longer can be done. The truth is, that from the great distance in time at which they all stand from us, several historical periods, making up that long series of

ages, blend together before our eyes. We think of the call of Abraham and that of Moses, as if they were not very far apart, instead of being separated by a lapse of time longer than from now back to the revival of letters in Europe. And from Moses to Solomon, as long as the whole history of England since Edward the Third, what changes must have taken place upon the world in general as well as upon the Hebrews, which ordinarily we make little allowance for.

In relation to the greatest of those religious changes, the whole history arrays itself into two periods, divided by the broad transition-band of two or three hundred years, the central line of which lies about the middle of the fifteenth century before Christ. In the period prior to that epoch, the style of religion, in every country where we obtain a view of it, is, in some material features, different from that in the succeeding. And the nature of the change was similar in all; the spontaneous worship of the earlier time becoming a ceremonial, established by law, in the later.

Declension from the primitive type of religion began early, and, in some quarters, progressed rapidly; and had little to restrain it in the prudential arrangements of society as gathered from the lessons of experience. Great wickedness was allowed to become conspicuous, and to run its course, until it reached the degree of being intolerable. And national religion, when once it had begun to err, being left to the hands of the nation or monarch who believed it, sank with facility into error, and became base in practice, while continuing to be reverenced as religion. Without the common standard of a writ-

ten creed, the separate tribes and nations were left to worship God in their own way, and to call upon God by a name of their own choosing. How far they possessed a common tradition it shall be part of our work to inquire. Accordingly, both among individuals and nations iniquity, in many cases, developed itself in degrees, which were monstrous.

On the other hand, great attention was given to the subject of religion through all that time. Religion, whether true or false, was everywhere the first of all concerns. The Greco-Roman period was comparatively rationalistic and critical. Speaking generally, the people of pre-Hellenic civilization lived with a more constant eye to God than did their successors. The direction of the mind was often wrong, but it was eminently concerned with the way of meeting God's favor, and averting his wrath. The literature bequeathed to us by the Greeks and Romans is recommended by its philosophical and æsthetic merit; but that which has been preserved from the higher antiquity comes to us as revelation from Heaven, or, at least, as consecrated to divine service. The great works of ancient sacred Scripture, with the single exception of the New Testament, are all the product of pre-Hellenic antiquity.* Then were

* By pre-Hellenic I mean previous to the establishment of Greek dominion. The pre-Hellenic civilization is that which held rule over the ancient civilized world until the Greek under the lead of Alexander superseded it. The history of the two great periods of antiquity overlap for a few generations. Productions of Greek culture had been accumulating before those of the Oriental ceased; but the decisive crisis in the world's history was that which transferred dominion over the area of civilization from the Persian to the Greek.

written the sacred Books of the Hebrews, and those most highly venerated in the religion of the Egyptians, of the Brahmans, of the Buddhists, and of the Parsees. The esteem of those persons, in whose keeping ancient literature was, especially rested upon that class of books. The remains of ancient Greco-Roman literature are classic; those of pre-Hellenic literature are sacred. Later productions presented as of that kind, such as the Koran, and the Book of Mormon, are fabrications, made up of ancient material and after an ancient model; those of primitive antiquity, whether divinely inspired or not, are the spontaneous utterance of sincere devotion. There may be great errors in the early Persic and Hindu hymns; but there is no imposture. They breathe the spirit of honest, fresh originality.

II.

SACRED BOOKS OF THE HINDUS.

Many as are the illustrious nations, which have branched out from the Aryan stock, they were slow in taking their place of eminence in history. During all the flourishing ages of oriental civilization, among the great cities on the Tigris, the Nile, and in Syria, that branch of mankind was lost to the view of the world then in power. Far away among the hills and plains of Aria and the Punjab, did the fathers of the European and Hindu spend long successive ages of obscurity. And yet, among themselves even then, as modern re-

search has ascertained, they had a culture of their own, which although scanty, entered into the formation of ethnic character, afterwards developed, in many a distant country, in unrivaled breadth and variety. Of that culture the principal means was religious and popular song. The spontaneous expression of devotion, those poems were preserved in the memories of persons who took pleasure in them, and early employed in the service of religion, and that with the more formality as religion became more ritual. In the course of time the freedom of production came to an end, and then the poems which had become sacred in the minds of worshipers were collected and arranged in order for greater convenience in use.

The oldest books of the Hindus are the Vedas, containing their sacred canon, with the forms of worship and other observances of their religion. Of these, one is a large collection of hymns, to the number of one thousand and twenty-eight. It is called the Rig-Veda, the Veda of Praise. Two others bearing the names of the Yajur-Veda, and of the Sama-Veda, respectively, are service books, containing all that was necessary for the right performance of the ancient sacrificial worship. The Atharva-Veda is of later origin than the others, and has never been regarded with the same degree of veneration.

In that worship four classes of priests were employed: first, the working priests, who made all the material preparations for the sacrifice and slew and offered up the victim. At every step in their work they had to recite or mutter certain forms of words selected from the an-

cient hymns. The Yajur-Veda or sacrificial Veda was their service-book, containing the verses which they had to repeat, classified according to the special sacrifices, to the celebration of which they belonged.

The second order of priests was that of the choristers, who sung or chanted certain hymns at appointed places in the course of the ceremony. For them the service book was the classified selection of verses used especially in the soma or moonplant ceremony, called the Sama-Veda.

The fourth and highest order was that of the chief priests, whose duty was to preside over the whole, and set right whatever may have been done incorrectly. To them it pertained to be thoroughly versed in all the sacred songs and formulas. But the sacred-book, which contained their own proper part of the worship, was the Atharva-Veda.

For the order of priests third in rank there was no proper service-book prepared. Their duty was to recite or read certain hymns from the old original collection, the Veda of Praise.

Of all these four holiest books the most important, accordingly, as being the original, is the Rig-Veda. From it are most of the devotional parts of two other Vedas taken. It is the Genesis of the Hindu religion and literature. But whereas the Hebrew Genesis is prose history, this is sacred and popular poetry. In the Hebrew canon other books were added, from time to time, in the same spirit and power; in Sanskrit all succeeding parts of the canon were addressed to the Veda in the way of commentary, selections from it arranged

liturgically for public worship, and treatises written upon its meaning, explanation of its words, of its metres, its accents, the proper religious manner of pronouncing it, and so on. The Rig-Veda is, accordingly, the fountain-head of all Sanskrit literature. Its hymns, in ancient Brahminical faith, were held to be from everlasting, not composed by any human genius, but revealed.

Belonging to the Rig-Veda, and included under its name, are certain treatises in prose, called Brahmanas, designed chiefly to teach the Brahminical ceremonial, and enforce it; but also explaining the sacred meaning of the hymns, and giving various information about the persons to whom they were revealed. These ancient annotations are themselves held sacred as belonging to the head of revelation, the term Veda comprehending both *Sanhita* or collection of *Mantras*, that is, hymns, and Brahmanas. But while the latter depend upon the hymns, as commentary upon its text, none of the hymns have any reference to them. There are Brahmanas upon all the Vedas, and all are considered sacred; but they are all of later origin than the hymns with which they are connected. Neither of the liturgical Vedas could have been what it is without the hymns which are collected in the Rig-Veda. These latter stand forth simply as the product of devotional zeal in their respective composers, evincing no knowledge whatever of liturgical collections.*

* All the verses of the Sama-Veda and Yajur-Veda are used in one ritual observance or another. Such is not the case with the Rig-Veda. Many of its hymns are used in that way, as indeed many are

Such a mass of popular and religious poetry was certainly not all composed in one generation. But in addition to this improbability, some of the hymns, by their own showing, are older than others, the "hymns of sons, the hymns of fathers, and of earlier ancestors." *

The poetical parts of the Rig-Veda are thus clearly separate from, and of higher antiquity than all other Hindu sacred books. The depth of that antiquity cannot be fathomed with precision. But the relations of the various classes of sacred books to their predecessors and to one common head, constitute a scale by which scholars are enabled to form an approximate estimate. Indian story is singularly destitute of chronology. But a fixed point for the ancient is obtained from a synchronism with Greek history. It is the reign of Chandragupta, king of Pataliputra, to whom Megasthenes was sent as an ambassador from Seleucus Nicator. Chandragupta, accordingly, was king in the last quarter of the fourth century before Christ, the very epoch at which Greek dominion superseded the Persian. In the generation preceding him, the throne of Pataliputra had been occupied by Nanda, in whose reign flourished Katyâyana, a celebrated annotator on the Veda. By comparison of the works of Katyâyana,

copied into the other Vedas for that purpose. But a large number remain, which have nothing to do with any ceremony: no part of the ritual has been able to work them in. Their arrangement in the collection is according to their authors, or the objects addressed, or their length; not according to any religious service.

* M. Muller, "Lecture on the Veda."

who is thus referred to the middle of the fourth century with those of some other ancient writers of the same class, a degree of light is thrown upon the otherwise dark chronology. For an illustrious predecessor of Katyâyana was Asvalâyana, and the teacher of Asvalâyana was Saunaka, the most highly valued of that class of commentators on the Veda, whose works are called Sutras. The date of Saunaka must therefore be about 400 B. C. By a similar process, but not so clear, the beginning of the period in which Sutras were prepared, is carried back by Prof. Müller to about 600 B. C. By those writers the contents of the Vedas were taken account of, as were the Hebrew Scriptures by the Jewish Rabbis. In Saunaka's annotations and indices for the Rig-Veda, the number is given of all the verses which that collection contains, and of all the words and syllables of which they consist. No enlargement or diminution of the sacred text could after that time be made, to the amount of a single word, without detection. And the state of its existence now is very closely what it was described by those ancient critics.

But still anterior to the Sutras and to the Anakremanis, as the statistical notes are called, are the Brahmanas, which even in the Sutra time were regarded as holy and revealed literature of great antiquity. That reputation could scarcely have been acquired in less than between two and three hundred years. The difference of language and style between those two classes of production is also great. Although some Brahmanas are esteemed older than others, yet they differ more

widely from the succeeding works than they differ from one another.*

As the Brahmanas are illustrations of the Vedas, written to explain the sacrificial observances, and to throw light upon the hymns and to interpret their obsolete terms, it is plain that the language of the Vedas was already in some respects obsolete, and the ancient practices at sacrifice falling out of use or greatly increased in number when such explanations were needed. All four Vedas were already ancient in the period when the Brahmanas were written.

But, in the next place, two of the Vedas were made up largely of selections from the first, adapting them to a ceremonial with the strict formality of a legal system. All these changes did not grow up in a day. Recitation of certain hymns from memory, at the proper places in sacrifice, prepared the way for the regular and authoritative disposal of them in a collection for public service. And then it must have taken time to create the occasion for, and sanction the organizing of such a numerous and powerful caste of priests, and to classify them into their different grades and offices. Yet all this sacerdotal work had to be completed before the idea of the liturgical Vedas could have been suggested. And the time necessary for it must have elapsed between the composition of all the Rig-Veda hymns used in worship and the construction of the very first of the other Vedas. The spirit and substance of the hymns, though most of them were prepared for use in sacrifice,

* Muller's "History of Sanskrit Literature," pp. 74, 233, 240, and 312.

refer themselves to a period in which sacerdotal organization was only elementary and the elaborate ritual yet unprovided for.*

Further, it also appears from the hymns themselves, as would naturally be conjectured, that they were composed by different authors, some of whom were far separate from each other in time.

Consequently, it is not an extravagant estimate which assigns the composition of those hymns to a period between 1200 and 1500 years before Christ. It is probable that some of them are much older. The Hebrew Scriptures did not need glossorial help until after the Babylonish captivity. The Holy Books of the Hindus, without any such national calamity, stood in need of it several hundred years earlier. The Veda dialect had ceased to be spoken as early, at least, as B. C. 300. And the languages then used in India were already related to it as Italian to Latin. The songs, which are its oldest literature, it does not seem reasonable to assign to a later date than that of the older Hebrew books.† Their religion more resembles that of Hebrew worship before Moses than that which he introduced. The work of putting them together in the existing Rig-Veda Sanhita, or collection, "we may safely," says Prof. Max Müller,‡ "ascribe to an age not entirely free from the trammels of a ceremonial, yet not completely enslaved by a system of mere formalities, to an age no longer

* Muller's "Review of Haug's Aitareya Brahmana."

† Some of them express the ideas of the transition time, others belong to an earlier style of spontaneous devotion.

‡ "History of Sanskrit Literature," p. 477.

creative and impulsive, yet not without some power of upholding the traditions of a past that spoke to a later generation of men, through the very poems which they were collecting with so much zeal and accuracy."

If the making of that collection belonged to the incipient period of the national ceremonial, when a particular branch of the people was only beginning to take to itself the duties and to exercise the power of a sacerdotal class, the hymns themselves date from an earlier stage in that process, and some of them apparently from long before it began.

All the other religious books of India are of later ages, and belong to the history of the growing and matured polytheistic system, and the full maturity of its ceremonial and priesthood. They are liturgical, sacerdotal, legal.

III.

THE SACRED BOOKS OF THE PERSIANS.

The Avesta is a collection of religious books much smaller than the Vedas, but of analogous character. It consists of three parts, the Yasna, partly liturgical, but comprehending also the ancient devotional songs; the Vispered, wholly liturgical, and the Vendidad, chiefly concerned with the law of social and daily life. The whole is ordinarily called the Zend-Avesta. But latterly, the propriety of that name has been questioned. According to the modern Parsees, Avesta means the

sacred text, and Zend its Pehlevi translation; while by the Pehlevi translators themselves, the original work is called the Avesta-Zend. Dr. Haug, superintendent of Sanskrit studies in the college at Poona, and whose authority stands among the highest in this branch of scholarship, supposes that the earliest portions of the collection ought to be called Avesta, and the later portions Zend; taking the latter to mean commentary or explanation. Neither Avesta nor Zend occurs in the books themselves. For the name of the whole collection Spiegel, the first to translate them into German, uses only the word Avesta.

Such a relation as the Rig-Veda holds to the other Vedas, does the Yasna hold to the other books of the Avesta. It is the oldest of the three, and embraces the Gathas or hymns, which are more ancient than the rest of its own contents. From these hymns are furnished the devotional parts of Parsee worship, the recitation of which is prescribed in the ceremonial books. The Yasna is reverentially mentioned or alluded to in the other books, and the Gathas especially are praised as eminently holy. They are also mentioned in other parts of the Yasna itself; are themselves Yasna, but clearly the original, most ancient of the sections which bear that name. They contain no mention of the other books, and are complete in themselves. In the other books to recite them is prescribed as an act of worship. Such is the case in other parts of the Yasna. None of the other parts of the Avesta could be what they are without the Gathas. All of them, other parts of the Yasna as well as the rest, imply the previous existence

of those sacred songs. The difference in point of age was great enough to allow time for considerable change in the Parsee language. That of the Gathas was already antiquated when the earliest of the other books were composed. It approaches nearer than their dialect to that of the Veda. The Gathas were composed at a date when there was less difference between the language of the Hindus and that of the Parsees than had grown up ere the Vispered and Vendidad came into being. Beyond all question, they are the oldest parts of the Parsee canon, and they alone are ascribed by the best judges to Zarathustra. Compared with their religion that of the later books is less simple and more liturgical. But the development of the ceremonial and growth of the sacerdotal power made comparatively little progress among the ancient Parsees. For, although the tendency existed among them, yet repeated revolution interfered and turned the course of things back towards the simpler worship of the oldest books. The spirit of the Gathas dictated the aim of the principal reforms. Accordingly, to them must we look for the true features of the ancient Parsee religion.

How far into antiquity that instruction will carry us is a matter not easily ascertained. But the most competent critics have assigned them a place next to the most ancient hymns of the Veda.

A fourth book of the collection is the Khordah Avesta, of less antiquity than the others, but of importance, when we inquire what parts of Persian worship were assigned to the people.

IV

THE BUDDHIST SACRED CANON.

Buddhism is a dissent from Brahmanism, which arose in Northern India about the middle of the sixth century before Christ. It opposed itself to the whole sacerdotal system which by that time had become a perfect spiritual despotism in the hands of the Brahmans. Rejecting the sacrifices, the ritual and the whole pantheon which had grown up under Brahmanical teaching, Buddha presented himself as the author of a moral doctrine founded upon virtue and charity. The old Hindu philosophy he scarcely disturbed, but proposed to remove all the ills of human life by teaching men how to subdue and silence the affections which render them susceptible of unhappiness. The rapidity with which Buddhism spread, argues the existence of very generally recognized and serious evils in the Brahmanical religion, the established and already antiquated ritual of the Hindus.

In the third century before Christ, Buddhism was authoritatively set up as the state religion of India, a place which it retained for hundreds of years. Subsequently. Brahmanism revived, and put forth every energy to reduce its opponent, which it ultimately succeeded in expelling from the country. All Buddhist books, found in India, were destroyed. And the doctrine, which had already been accepted in other nations, was now more widely and zealously diffused by the persecuted refugees. Among the fastnesses of the

Himalaya mountains in Nepal and on the opposite extremity of the peninsula, in the island of Ceylon, it succeeded in holding its ground as well as in prosecuting its victories, on the north in Thibet, Mongolia, and China, and on the south in Burmah and Siam, still the religion of the largest population on the globe.

The sacred canon of the Buddhists was written originally in Sanskrit and from its threefold division called, collectively, the TRIPITAKA, that is, the Three Baskets. Of these three portions one, consisting of a collection of moral precepts, is called the Vinaya-Pitaka; another, containing important sayings of Buddha, is the Sutra-Pitaka; and the third, the Dharma or Abhidharma-Pitaka "includes all the works treating of dogmatic philosophy or metaphysics." "The first and second Pitakas contain each five separate works; the third contains seven." Sometimes the term Dharma is used as comprehending both the second and third parts. It is a voluminous canon, and has by its devotees been translated or paraphrased into various languages. As it appears in Thibet, it consists of three hundred and twenty-five volumes or more. Copies, perhaps not of all contained in the Thibetan version, are known to exist also in the Mongolian, Japanese, and Chinese. The Pali, an ancient dialect of the Sanskrit, contains a recension of the sacred canon, which is used in Ceylon, and to which the copies used in Burmah and Siam are conformed. The Sanskrit originals are still retained in the worship of Nepal. The regular, though free monastic institutions of Buddhism are admirably calculated

to preserve such treasures of sacred literature if not to promote the knowledge of them.

Though ancient, Buddhism is not a primitive religion, but a revolt of philosophy and philanthropy against priest-craft.

V.

EGYPTIAN SOURCES.

Of the forty-two books of the Egyptian sacred canon, described by Clement of Alexandria, none are known to be extant, unless the monumental papyrus is one of them, which seems probable. Copies of it, buried with embalmed bodies, have thus been well preserved, and are to be seen in the museums of Europe and of this country. It is certainly a religious book. But all that is now most reliable on the subject of the earliest religion of Egypt must be gathered from her sculptured monuments. The amount of material, available for that purpose, is very considerable, and has been brought to our firesides in the descriptions of Wilkinson and the admirable drawings of Lepsius, and the works of their many learned fellow-laborers.

The precise age of the monuments can not in all cases be ascertained, and, in some, not very approximately conjectured; but the periods in the world's history, to which the different groups of them correspond, admit of little question. Whatever may be said of the royal Egyptian dynasties, counted earliest in Manetho, it seems to be well established that the twen-

ty-second corresponded in date to the public life of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and to the reigns of his immediate successors on the throne of the Ten Tribes; those of the twenty-first and twentieth to the time of the united kingdom of the Hebrews and part of the Judges; the nineteenth and eighteenth dynasties, to the earlier Hebrew history, back to the Exode; and that of the Osirtosens of the twelfth dynasty, to a period not later than that of Abraham. And the final scene of Egyptian civilization, in native hands, closed more than two hundred years before the oriental dominion of the Greek began.

Of the monumental testimonies, the most copious and valuable are those contained in the tombs, which pierce the rocky ledge on the western side of the Nile, near where anciently stood the city of Memphis; those inscribed upon the temples and tombs of Upper Egypt, especially on the site of Thebes; and those executed by the kings of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, at the various places favored by their patronage.

On those monuments appear pictorial representations of gods, priests, worshippers in acts of sacrifice, offerings, prayer, adoration, in religious processions and the various attitudes of worship, with the names of eminent persons engaged in those scenes and literal descriptions of the whole.

Of the books described by Clement as those of Hermes (Thoth) the first was one of hymns to the gods; the second contained the whole duty of a King's life. Then followed treatises on Astronomy, on hieroglyphics, on cosmography, geography, topography of Egypt, and

particular description of the Nile; on utensils and concomitants of sacrifices, and of places consecrated to them; the books pertaining to discipline and education, and on the duties of those who selected and sealed calves for sacrifice. Ten books taught what was necessary to be done for the worship and honor of the gods, embracing the whole of the Egyptian ceremonial in regard to sacrifices, firstlings, hymns, prayers, processions, festivals, and such things. Ten books were especially sacerdotal, treating of the laws and of the gods, and the whole system and discipline of the priests. The last six pertained to the care of the human body, its structure and diseases, with their medical and surgical means of treatment. In short the forty-two holy books of Egypt seem to have comprehended all branches of learning, of philosophy, of art, of science and of statesmanship, as well as of religion, known to their authors. All knowledge not servile was sacerdotal, and the priesthood, which held possession of its principles, blended it with religion. It is in relation to Egyptian philosophy that Clement adduces these sacred books, and he mentions them together with the different orders of priests, to whose service they respectively belonged, and with the place of the priests in the great sacerdotal processions.* Apparently the most ancient and highly valued of all was the book containing the hymns to the gods.

It can no longer be a matter of question that much of what was contained in the books remains depicted upon the monuments, and perhaps some of the poetry

* Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, B. vi. pp. 633–634 Cologne ed. of 1688.

there inscribed may be portions from the book of hymns. As to the extant "Book of the dead," or "Funereal Ritual," it is not easy to say in what part of the recorded canon it could have had its place, or whether it belonged to the forty-two at all. It is indubitably sacerdotal, and very ancient, and yet can not be the production of a primitive age in religious history. Bearing the internal marks of various stages of growth at long intervals of time, the primitive and simple ideas of a future state being, in successive periods of theological exposition, developed into an elaborate system of rewards and punishments by transmigrations, absorption in God, or annihilation; as it now stands, the book is obviously a product of a matured sacerdotal philosophy, the Apocalypse of Egypt, the final volume of her finished Theology.

It "opens by a grand dialogue taking place at the very moment of death, when the soul separates from the body. The deceased addressing the deity of Hades, enumerates all his titles to his favor, and asks for admittance into his dominions. The chorus of glorified souls interposes, as in the Greek tragedy, and supports the prayer of the deceased. The priest on earth in his turn speaks, and implores also the divine clemency. Finally Osiris, the god of the lower regions, answers the deceased, 'Fear nothing in making thy prayer to me for the immortality of thy soul, and that I may give permission for thee to pass the threshold.' Reassured by the divine word, the soul of the deceased enters Kar-Neter, the land of the dead, and recommences his invocations."

This chapter is followed by thirteen others of less importance relative "to the dead and to the preliminary ceremonies of his funeral." When at last the soul "has passed the gates of Kar-Neter," the fifteenth chapter carries him "into that subterranean region." "At his entry he is dazzled by the glory of the sun, which he now for the first time sees in the lower hemisphere. He sings a hymn to the sun under the form of mixed litanies and invocations. After this hymn, a great vignette, representing the adoration and glorification of the sun in the heavens, on earth and in Hades, marks the end of the first part of the Ritual." The second "traces the journeys and migrations of the soul in the lower region." "The knowledge of religious truths is the mysterious nourishment the soul must carry with it to sustain it in its journeys and trials. A soul not possessing this knowledge could never reach the end of its journey, and would be rejected at the tribunal of Osiris. It was therefore necessary, before commencing the journey, to be furnished with a stock of this divine provision. To this end is destined the long chapter (the seventeenth,—on the Egyptian faith), at the commencement of the second part. It is accompanied by a large vignette, representing a series of the most sacred symbols of the Egyptian religion. The text contains a description of those symbols, with their mystical explanation." "Next came a series of prayers to be pronounced during the process of embalming." "The body once wrapped in its coverings, and the soul well provided with a store of necessary knowledge, the deceased commences his journey" through the intervening

regions of Hades to the judgment hall of Osiris; in the course of which he passes through trials, examinations, and instructions, and encounters objects of terror and danger. Part of the journey is performed by the soul alone, until after it has passed through the inevitable transformations. It then returns to its own body, the companionship of which is needed for the rest of the way.

Thus the deceased passes through the dwelling of Thoth, and crosses the subterranean river in the boat of the dead, upon entering which he is subjected to another trial and another examination. On the other side of the river he comes to Elysium, in the valley of Aoura, where he meets many and great dangers as well as pleasures. Conducted by Anubis he then traverses the labyrinth, and through its windings penetrates to the hall of judgment, "where Osiris awaits him, seated on his throne, and assisted by forty-two terrible assessors. There the decisive sentence is to be pronounced, either admitting the deceased to happiness, or excluding him for ever."

Then ensues an examination more severe and solemn than any of the preceding. "The deceased is obliged to give proof of his knowledge; he must show that it is great enough to give him the right to be admitted to share the lot of glorified spirits." He has to answer each of the forty-two judges, and "give an account of his whole life." "I have not blasphemed;" he says, "I have not stolen; I have not smitten men privily; I have not treated any person with cruelty; I have not stirred up trouble; I have not been idle; I have not

been intoxicated; I have not made unjust commandments; I have shown no improper curiosity; I have not allowed my mouth to tell secrets; I have not wounded any one; I have not put any one in fear; I have not slandered any one; I have not let envy gnaw my heart; I have spoken evil neither of the king nor of my father; I have not falsely accused any one; I have not withheld milk from the mouths of sucklings; I have not practiced any shameful crime; I have not calumniated a slave to his master."

"The deceased does not confine himself to denying any ill-conduct; he speaks of the good he has done in his life-time. I have made to the gods the offerings that were their due. *I have given food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and clothes to the naked.*"

"Besides these general precepts, the apology acquaints us with some police regulations for public order, raised by common interest in Egypt to the rank of conscientious duties. Thus, the deceased denies ever having intercepted the irrigating canals, or having prevented the distribution of the waters of the river over the country; he declares that he has never damaged the stones for mooring vessels on the river."

"Crimes against religion also are mentioned. The deceased has never altered the prayers, nor interpolated them. He has never touched any of the sacred property, such as flocks and herds, or fished for the sacred fish in the lakes of the temples; he has not stolen offerings from the altar, nor defiled the sacred waters of the Nile."

"The Osiris is now fully justified; his heart has been

weighed in the balance with 'truth,' and not been found wanting; the forty-two assessors have pronounced that he possesses the necessary knowledge. The great Osiris pronounces his sentence, and Thoth, as recorder to the tribunal, having inscribed it in his book, the deceased at last enters into bliss.

Here commences the third part of the Ritual, more mystical and obscure than the others. We see the Osiris, that is, the justified deceased, henceforth identified with the sun, traversing with him, and as him, the various houses of heaven and the lake of fire, the source of all light. Afterwards the Ritual rises to a higher poetical flight, even contemplating the identification of the deceased with a symbolical figure comprising all the attributes of the deities of the Egyptian pantheon. This representation ends the work." *

"Precisely the same doctrine, as in the Funereal Ritual, though in a much more abridged form, is found in the 'Book of transmigrations,' a very short work sometimes deposited in sepulchres of not very remote antiquity. We possess also some copies of a book consisting almost entirely of pictures with but little text, on the course of the sun in the lower world, and numerous fragments of collections of hymns, sometimes in the highest style of poetry."†

All this knowledge of men and of the world, all these ideas of another life, had been communicated to the Egyptians, as the priests said, by Thoth, the first Hermes

* Lenormant's "Ancient Hist. of the East," vol. i., book iii., chap. v., sect. 6.

† Ibid.

Trismegistus, or "thrice greatest," who wrote all these books by the order of the supreme God. The first Thoth was the celestial Hermes, or the personification of the divine intelligence. The second Hermes, who was only an imitation of the first, passed for the author of all the social institutions of Egypt. He it was who had organized the Egyptian nation, established religion, regulated the ceremonies of public worship, and taught men the science of astronomy, numbers, geometry, the use of weights and measures, language and writing, the fine arts, and, in short, all the arts of civilization.

This material of intelligence had, at a very early date, been collected and digested in the sacred books, and the priests, who had the keeping of them, were "obliged to know their contents wholly, or in part, according to the nature of their functions, and their rank in the hierarchy." It seems most probable that "The Book of the Dead" was one of the holy books of Thoth, whether of the forty-two or not. For, as Osiris was the prototype of kings, so was Thoth of the priesthood, the divine minister of science and religion.

The book, thus described, is clearly the product not of a simple primitive religion, but of one elaborately built up of accumulated rites, ceremonies, duties, in the fetters of which freedom is utterly extinguished. It is also pervaded with a subtle philosophy, which transforms every element of it into symbol, spiritualizing the material, and materializing the spiritual, by the harmony of a pantheism, which is at the same time inconsistent with some of the fundamental ingredients of Egyptian faith. Marks of growth are also discernable, and of

the process whereby philosophy has attempted to convert without altering certain practices older than itself. In the long chapter (xvii) on the Egyptian faith, there has been remarked a distinction between original text and explanation, "the latter, in every case, following the former, and being prefaced by a group of characters in red, meaning 'The explanation is this,' or 'Let him explain it,'" and yet the chapter becomes the more obscure as it progresses. Whence it has been inferred "that the text had, by a certain time, become so unintelligible as to require an explanation; and secondly, that the explanation itself had, in its turn, become unintelligible, and finally that text and gloss, equally obscure, had been jumbled together and written out as one continuous document." All this must have occurred at a very early date, as a copy of this seventeenth chapter is found upon a coffin belonging to the period of the eleventh dynasty, in the condition here described.*

From very ancient date, it was the custom of the Egyptians to provide their deceased with forms of prayer and incantation, to guide them through the regions of Hades and protect them against evil spirits. These forms "were inscribed on the sarcophagus, or written on papyrus and deposited in the mummy case." In process of time, they were "by degrees collected and arranged," and thus grew up into a canon of mortuary writings, which ultimately assumed the proportions of

* Bunsen's Egypt 2nd ed. English trans. vol. v. pp. 89, 90; and Dr. Birch's translation of the Ritual in the same vol. Lenormant's "Ancient Hist. of the East," vol. i. p. 309.

a sacred book. "Sometimes particular chapters only of the Ritual were deposited with the deceased, sometimes a synopsis of the whole, and again the entire ritual, written out with care, its sections distinguished by red lines, and the headings beautifully illustrated with vignettes."*

"The oldest papyri, containing portions of the Ritual, have been assigned to the eighteenth dynasty, and this is probably the age of the earliest known in Europe at the present day."† "At this period, from 1500 to 1700 B.C., extracts and representations from the Book of the Dead abound on the walls of tombs, especially the royal tombs at Thebes. But these are likewise found inscribed upon sarcophagi of a much earlier date; as, for instance, on the coffin of a Mentuhotep of the eleventh dynasty (2500 B.C.,) the most important chapters are given in full, and one of these is said in the hieroglyphics to have been composed in the reign of Menkheres, the builder of the third pyramid."‡ Apparently that ancient portion was the nucleus of the whole, and the copy on the coffin of Mentuhotep was all that the book amounted to, under the eleventh dynasty.

* See Dr. Joseph P. Thompson's article "The Egyptian doctrine of a future Life," in the Bibliotheca Sacra for January, 1868, p. 69.

† Birch, in Bunsen's Egypt, vol. v. p. 130. Lepsius, Aelteste Texte.

‡ Bibliotheca Sacra. Jan. 1868, p. 79.

VI.

TESTIMONY OF ASSYRIA

The testimony of Assyria is of the same general character, though less specific, descending to fewer particulars and with less careful and minute description. Upon the ruins of Nineveh, of Sargina, of Calah, and of Ashur, amid scenes of hunting, and war, and state parade, stand conspicuous the pictorial records of religious observance. Greater facility in reading the language of the Assyrian writing, which is to be expected, may hereafter throw a steadier light upon the pictures; for the present we have to regret that much of their testimony is of dubious import, and to be rendered by its apparent analogy with what is clearer.

The termination of Assyrian history is itself very ancient. Nineveh fell never more to rise, at a date more than six hundred years before Christ. The succeeding reign of Babylon was brief, and terminated before another century closed. Some of the celebrated monuments of both cities were completed but a short time before their overthrow. But by far the greater number in these, as well as in other Assyrian cities, were of much higher antiquity: and to what date the earliest are to be assigned has not yet been determined. Some are thought to be as old, at least, as the third or fourth dynasty of Egyptian kings.

From a fragment of Berosus we learn that "the Babylonians and Assyrians had eight sacred books, and that they attributed the authorship of them to Oannes,

the mythical founder of their civilization." Out of these books Berosus drew the information, which he gives touching the cosmogony believed in Babylon; and "from the same source also, but indirectly, derived the very correct ideas on the Chaldæo-Assyrian religion preserved by the Greek philosopher, Damascius."

No original fragment of the books of Oannes has been preserved, no paper book, "nor any portion of the chronicles relating the whole history of Nineveh and Babylon." But a great number of tablets of baked clay, having on each side a page of very small and closely written cuneiform cursive letters, were found by Mr. Layard in the ruins of Nineveh. They were part of the library "established by king Ashurbanipal in one of the halls of his palace." Numbered and arranged in order, these pages formed treatises on a variety of subjects, being "the remains of an immense grammatical encyclopædia, treating of the difficulties of the writing and language" of Assyria, with kindred topics, scientific and historical. Besides the architectural inscriptions cut in slabs of stone, many have also been found on earthen cylinders of a nature similar to those upon the tablets, that is, constituting regular treatises in book fashion.

Among these remains there is much fragmentary information, direct and indirect, about mythology; but nothing like a canonical book has yet been deciphered.*

* Berosus, as quoted by Syncellus, chron. 28. Eusebius, chron. 5. 8. Cory's ancient fragments, pp. 21-29, 30-31. Lenormant, Ancient Hist. of the East, vol. i. book iv. chap. iv. sect. 3, 4, 5.

VII.

SACRED BOOKS OF THE HEBREWS.

From the religious books of other ancient nations, those of the Hebrews differ in being mainly historical. At a later time they also presented their collection of hymns or devotional songs, some of which pertain to the earliest periods of their literature; but the basis of their religious canon was not poetry, but solid history. Whatever criticism may assail the reality of their facts, none can shake the stability of their form, nor the sobriety of their historic spirit. Some of their advocates have represented the earlier portions as retrospective visions, their enemies have endeavored to prove them myths; unbiased inspection will, without hesitation, assign them to the head of honest and simple narrative. That the first of those books, in its present form, has not descended to us from the time in which any, even the latest of its events occurred, is capable of easy demonstration; and it is just as plain that it has undergone the process of modernization, receiving the explanation of old names from more recent names, and other additions from editorial hands, at some date subsequent to the conquest of Canaan. And yet that the book of Genesis is the most ancient in the Hebrew collection, appears not only from the place to which it is assigned in the arrangement of the books; for that, although very ancient, was, of course, optional with the learned Rabbis who made it, though, it may be presumed, their reasons were good; but also from its internal archaic

structure and tone and its substantial relations to the other books. The existence of none of the other books is implied in it; none of the Mosaic ritual is implied in its worship. It knows nothing about a legal priesthood, a tabernacle, or a stated oracle, and the principal features which marked the Mosaic and succeeding times, are all unrecognized in it. While all the other historical books, and most, if not all, of the Psalms mention or allude to or assume the existence of what is contained in it, nothing in it implies the existence of any of them. It is substantially pre-Mosaic, and bears distinct internal marks of belonging to the same primitive patriarchal style of society which gave birth to the earliest songs of the Veda and the Avesta.

To the value of Scripture it no way imports who the original writer was. The authority of inspiration is of equal weight without the sanction of a human name. Can it be determined who penned the book of Job, or of Judges, or of Chronicles, or some of the most beautiful and affecting of the Psalms? and are those parts of Scripture of inferior weight because of that unsettled question? Is a psalm less the dictate of inspiration if not penned by David? It is not the human authorship which confers the authority of inspiration; but, on the contrary, it is inspiration which gives his weight to any of the prophets, no matter what his name. The word of God bears its own stamp, and stands in no need of a voucher, in any name of human renown. There is that in it and about it whereby it is as truly distinguished from a work of the human mind, as a natural rose is distinguishable from an artificial one, or a natur-

al landscape from one arrayed according to the laws of art. As the silent declaration of Deity rises from nature, so does it from revelation, self-sustained and sustaining its defenders, while borrowing nothing from them. Whether we know, or do not know, the name and genealogy of God's human instrument in the case, is, in respect to scriptural authority, a matter of very little moment. Where the name of the writer has been recorded, and we know about him, in other connections, it is certainly gratifying to feel that we have a sort of personal acquaintance with one so favored of God; and yet it is undoubtedly not without design that the names of several Scripture writers have been withheld.

The book of Genesis came down from antiquity to the Hebrew nation with their laws, and through the hands of the lawgiver, and was, therefore, very naturally, by them classed under the same head; but that traditional classification is not entitled to forbid its full weight to the obvious fact that the book is anonymous. Yet, anonymous as it is, no other portion of Scripture bears the mark of Divine inspiration more legibly impressed upon it than the book of Genesis. The aroma of the early time is about it—the time when men of simple but princely manners and elevated piety held oral communion with God; and the passage with which it opens is not only obvious revelation, but also the sublimest in human language. The man of science, who honestly studies its first chapter, the Christian, who reads its narrative of the fall of man and the words of promise to the seed of Abraham, and considers its relation to the whole plan of redemption, stands in no need of a hu-

man voucher for its Divine origin. The question of its authorship is merely one of literary history; but, under that head, a question of no common interest.

Moses is a writer very careful about affixing his name to what he writes. The other books of the Pentateuch consist of a great number of subdivisions or topics, and to almost every several one of them is the name of Moses attached, and to all that contain revelations, together with the authority of God, as "The Lord spake unto Moses," or "Moses wrote this law," or some equivalent form of expression. And certainly if it was to him that God revealed the order of creation, or of primal mankind, there was the best of reasons for introducing that revelation with his usual sanction. But, in not one of the headings of the parts of Genesis, nor anywhere in their contents, does the name of Moses appear.

That the book was transmitted through the hands of Moses is a matter that admits of no dispute; but what he did for it must be determined otherwise than by mere tradition, however ancient that may be. Unsupported tradition is not competent to establish original authorship in a case of this kind: because, in the first place, the book of Genesis treats of matters which had all taken place ages before Moses was born; its latest subjects were to him antiquity; and, secondly, the account which it gives of many events is circumstantial and personally characteristic, descending even to details of conversations and descriptions of personal attitudes and incidents, which none could be cognizant of but the parties concerned. The very latest event mentioned

in Genesis had occurred, at the shortest estimate, more than half a century before Moses was born; and the rest of its human history covers a period extending to more than two thousand years of a prior antiquity; the earlier parts of it standing in relation to Moses, chronologically, as the times of Homer and Hesiod and Thales stand to ours. It is clear that he could not have been the original author of such a history by any natural means. The book could have come to his hands in only one of four ways: either the whole was revealed to him supernaturally; or its materials came down to him on the stream of tradition; or they were kept in detached records—written monuments of one kind or another, from which he composed the work; or, finally, the whole is an historical series, preserved in the usual historical way, and existing in its original historical integrity.

In the first place, the book of Genesis presents none of the features of a vision. Its simple directness, and plain daylight outlines, are such that, if it is a vision, it has no parallel in the rest of Scripture. In all the declared visions of the prophets there is certainly nothing like it.

Neither is it according to the analogy of Scripture to assume a retrospective revelation of human events. God has not, in subsequent time, suffered ages of important progress in the history of redemption to pass by unrecorded, and to be all forgotten, and then recalled them in a vision to some individual, thereby substituting the testimony of one person for that of whole generations. Other steps of the unfolding of the plan of

redemption were recorded in their proper time, and preserved in true historical manner. If Genesis must be made an exception, we need to have some good reason therefor.

Nowhere else, in Scripture, do we find a gratuitous interposition of revelation. The work which man is competent to do for himself, is never taken out of his hands. But to keep a record of remarkable events, occurring under one's eyes, is both natural for man to wish, and, when the art of writing is known, easy to effect.

The Divine discipline has never been such as to render human industry unnecessary, but always to educe it—to move man to record his own history rather than to suffer his mind to lie dormant and forget all that God had done for him, and then to bring it up again, at the end of centuries, when it had still to be recorded, in the way that it might have been at first. That is not the kind of discipline which we have learned to expect at the hand of God; and for a case, which is claimed to be of that kind, as being unparalleled, we need some most cogent reason.

It is certainly very improbable that holy men, favored with special revelation of the Divine will, should treat it with such neglect and forgetfulness;—that Noah, Abraham, Jacob, for instance, should keep no account of those wonderful revelations made to them, and which they understood were to affect deeply the well-being of future generations, and should coolly consign them to such utter oblivion, that, at the end of many ages, they had all to be revealed again, together with the very existence of the men to whom they were made.

Again, Moses was a man scrupulously careful to render God the glory of all communications received from him, and could not have neglected, through a whole book, to make the slightest recognition of a revelation so great and unparalleled: especially as that recognition would have been deemed a necessary voucher for the truth of the book. He would not have left to be assigned, in any degree, to the instrumentality of man, what he had received directly from God.

And, finally, the assumption that Genesis is a retrospective revelation, is entire gratuitous. It is without the slightest foundation in any recorded fact. Scripture nowhere asserts, or implies, or gives the least countenance to it.

Such was the length of life among the patriarchs, that tradition had but few hands to pass through between Adam and Moses; but that, in the first place, is not like the certainty which God establishes his word upon. He has taught us to make a very broad distinction between the written word and oral tradition. And, secondly, the book presents not the slightest appearance of oral tradition, while it contains passages of a kind which oral tradition has never elsewhere been known to retain—passages of recondite science, physical and ethnological, given in popular style, yet with perfect precision and order, as well as a number of long genealogical lists, some of them not belonging to the descendants of Jacob; and it contains a systematic chronology, not all arranged in relation to one era, but in each genealogy in relation to itself. In a matter of this kind, we are not concerned with what the human mem-

ory might possibly effect, or what some particular men of retentive memories can do. That belongs to mental science, or rather to the head of curiosities of mental phenomena. We have here to do with the law of oral tradition, among an unlettered people—not what a man might do, or can do; but what men, under those circumstances, are actually found to do. Now, Genesis contains materials, such as no production positively known to have taken its rise among an unlettered people, and its shape from oral tradition, is found to contain; and throughout, in all ascertainable matters—in geography, in ethnology, in history, in geology, in astronomy, and whatsoever it touches—it wears the stamp of the accuracy of writing. But might not tradition, as truly as writing, be supernaturally defended from error? True, it might; and we should promptly admit it, if God had given any instruction to that end; or, if the Saviour had not left a very strong testimony against tradition, as contradistinguished from the written word. And, thirdly, this is also a totally gratuitously assumption, founded upon another equally gratuitous assumption, namely, that none could be its first writer but Moses.

The halfway position that the book may have been composed from oral traditions, supplied and corrected by revelation, is liable to similar objections, and, like the preceding, is a pure assumption, without a particle of authority, human or divine.

On the other hand, while the book of Genesis is nowhere in Scripture mentioned as either a vision or tradition, it is repeatedly quoted as Scripture, that is, holy

writ. Thus, it is quoted in Romans, fourth chapter and third verse; Galatians, third chapter and eighth verse, and fourth chapter and thirtieth verse; and, in the twenty-second verse of that same chapter, it is referred to expressly as that which was written. I would not be understood to attach more to this fact than it fully amounts to, namely, that it discountenances any supposition that Genesis was produced in a way different from that common to other books of the sacred canon. And this is to be taken together with that other fact, that no passage quoted from it in Scripture is ever referred to Moses, although his name is frequently mentioned in connection with quotations from other books of the Pentateuch, and he is expressly said to have spoken all the *precepts* of the law. Heb. ix. 19.

In the gospel according to Luke, xxiv. 27, we find it said of the Saviour, that "beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself;" and hence might infer a final settlement of this question. Because, if there are things concerning the Messiah in Genesis, as we hold there are, it must be comprehended under the name of Moses, from whom, together with all the prophets, he began his exposition. But in order to that conclusion, we must show that the words "Moses, the prophets, and the Scriptures," are designations of authorship, and not mere classification of the sacred books. Upon attempting, however, to make this point good, from parallel passages, and passages of direct reference or quotation, we find everything going to determine the opposite. In the 44th verse of the same chap-

ter of Luke, "the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms," is obviously a classification of the books of Old Testament scripture. So in Matt. v. 17; vii. 12, and xxii. 40, and Luke xvi. 16, "the law and the prophets" are used as general terms comprehending all Scripture. In these last-mentioned instances it is clear that the words "law and the prophets" correspond respectively to Moses and the prophets in the first. The name of Moses, as the writer of the law, is used in a sense synonymous with law, according to a custom equally prevalent in our own language. And then either or both of them are used as terms whereby to designate a class of sacred books in which the law was the principal part. That group of books contained also history, poetry, and much else besides law, but the law was its great feature, and furnished a convenient designation of the whole, which every Hebrew rightly understood when so used. It was not, however, always confined to the Pentateuch. Jesus himself sometimes called the whole body of Old Testament scripture the law. (John x. 34; xv. 25); sometimes the two heads, the law and the prophets, were used as comprehensive of the whole, and sometimes three classes were made, the law, or Moses, or the law of Moses, being the name given to the first, the prophets designating the second, and the Psalms the third. It is clear that these names, so far from determining authorship, do just the very opposite, by grouping together under the same head books of acknowledgedly different authors, and of dates separate by hundreds of years. Thus, as Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon

were classed with the Psalms, although certainly not Psalms, and Kings with the Prophets, although really historical so Genesis was classed with the law of Moses, although not belonging to the law.

Genesis being thus arranged under the general head of the law by the Jews, the Saviour, by adopting, confirmed that classification; but did not, thereby, affirm anything else than that the classification was a proper one; just as much, and no more, as he affirmed of the other heads by adopting them.

So far then, we have the best authority for the historical connection of the book. It was correctly classed with the oldest books of the Old Testament.

But further, Scripture in several places makes a broad distinction between the materials of Genesis and the law, and in some of those places as distinctly assigns the book to a prior antiquity.

This position is remarkably illustrated in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah, where the people are said to have spent part of the day reading in the word of the law of the Lord, after which, in the course of their worship, they were led in prayer by the chief Levites. That prayer begins with a summary of what they had been reading, and presents an outline, first of the history contained in Genesis, continued down through the bondage in Egypt, and the exode, and then mentions particularly the giving of the law by the hand of Moses; thus recognizing the whole series of ancient writings as "the book of the law," and yet fully and carefully distinguishing the earlier history from the law properly so called. And

this distinction we find uniformly observed in Scripture, wherever anything but mere classification is meant. In the seventh chapter of Hebrews, the period of the promises to the patriarchs is very elaborately distinguished from that of the law. The apostle actually contrasts the one with the other; and in Galatians, third chapter and nineteenth verse, assigns the law to its proper place, as not only different from the preceding dispensation, but as only an addition thereto for a temporary purpose. The importance of that early history, as prior to the law, is set forth in many passages of subsequent Scripture (*e. g.* Psalm cv., Acts vii., Neh. ix., Heb. vii., Gal. iii.), which uniformly assumes its priority.

There was good reason for the classification of Genesis with the law, inasmuch as they had come down together from before the settlement of Israel in Canaan, and unitedly contained the preliminary history and national constitution of that people. In these very important respects, Genesis and the books of the law formed a group by themselves.

Such being the case, it is the more worthy of remark, that Scripture invariably observes a scrupulous discrimination touching their contents, purport and authorship.

The law is discriminately said to have been given by Moses, and he is declared to have spoken every precept thereof; but a quotation made from Genesis is quoted simply as Scripture—that is, as the written word of God. And in one such passage, Gal. iii. 8, the form of expression implies that what is quoted was written in

the time of Abraham. The written word is there said to have preached the gospel to Abraham.

Moreover, Genesis is never quoted, nor is any passage of it referred to as "the law," or as "the law of Moses," nor as the law, with any epithet; nor is it ever in any way alluded to as of contemporaneous origin with the law. This amounts to great cogency when we remember that Genesis is quoted many times, and the law, in one way and another, more than three hundred times, in Scripture; and yet never, in any instance, are the two confounded. Obviously this did not occur, in the case of books grouped together from such antiquity, without a careful intention.

Thus, in later Scripture, Genesis is repeatedly referred to as the written, and yet never assigned to Moses as the writer. Now, we hold that this discrimination is correct, and that it will be borne out by a fair consideration of the book itself and its ascertainable conditions.

In the first place, the book bears the unmistakable marks of a composition originally written. For instance, one part of it is headed, "This is the *book* of the generations of Adam." Gen. v. 1. Another, "These are the generations (that is, the family history), of Shem," and so on. Then the structure of some of its parts is that dependent upon the composition of them in writing. The great argument, and in fact, the sole reason for leaving these particulars out of view, or shrinking from granting to them their proper importance, is the unproved assumption that, in those days, writing was unknown.

Such was an utterly unjustifiable assumption at any period. Because the mere existence of an ancient book, bearing the features of written composition and the archaic character of the time to which it pertains, logically throws the presumption on the other side, which must hold its position unless displaced by some more cogent argument. Such an argument, as far as we know, never has been adduced, and the investigations of the last thirty years have now put it out of the question.

It is no longer a disputable point whether writing was practised before Moses or not; it is one of those things which to doubt is to betray ignorance; but we have also to add, that in the time of Moses the system of writing was already ancient, and that too, in the highest perfection it ever possessed among the Egyptians, with whom he was educated.

By the Egyptians various methods of writing were employed from very ancient date; but the most common, and really the basis of the whole, was, in its system, precisely the same as that employed by the Hebrews and Phœnicians. The Egyptian phonetic writing was only an elaborate multiplication of signs upon the same system which was common to them and the neighboring nations of Asia.

That system of writing, in all the completeness that ever belonged to it, is found, at this hour, upon monuments, which must have been inscribed long before Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees. Moreover, upon those same monuments we find pictures of books; and

repeatedly occur the bound papyrus roll and the scribes' writing apparatus, as graphic signs—evincing a pre-existing familiarity with the art. Under the fourth dynasty of Egyptian kings, at least two hundred years before the call of Abraham, such evidences of the antiquity of writing are both numerous and unmistakable.

A similar witness has recently arisen to testify to the antiquity of the same art in Assyria. Among the multitude of written monuments collected from the ruins of Babylon and Nineveh, some have come down from the very time of Abraham, and others, in the opinion of the most learned Assyrian archæologists, are probably older than that by more than two hundred years. And nothing has yet been discovered which intimates that research has entered upon the period when writing was invented.

Not only the art of writing, but also that of literary composition, had attained a high degree of excellence in the time of Moses. The works of that author bear no marks of incipiency, but rather of perfection in the art. More particularly, Hebrew style had already the completeness of its finish. The style of Moses does not stand to Hebrew as that of Lucilius to Latin, or that of Chaucer to English, but presents the features of its maturity. Hebrew, in his hands, has all the air of familiarity with literature, as if it had been long accustomed to artistic shape in letters. Although the Israelites were then only beginning to assume their place as a nation, their leaders and forefathers had been well informed, refined, and wealthy men, from time

immemorial; and their language was not a narrow, peculiar dialect of their own, but belonged to the whole stock of which they were sprung. Nor was it confined even to the descendants of Shem. In dialects but slightly differing from one another, it was the language at once of the Canaanites and of the empire founded by Nimrod on the Tigris and Euphrates. From Nineveh to Sidon and to the borders of Egypt, it was spoken with little variation. Indeed, what are commonly called the Semitic languages, should rather, if regard is had to the people by whom they were first extensively used, be called Hamitic. Hebrew was not the sole possession of the family of Abraham. It was the language of Canaan, when Abraham migrated there, and was spoken at that very time both in Sidon and in Babylon. The use of the Hebrew language or of a kindred dialect is no indubitable evidence of Semitic origin, unless associated with some more discriminate marks. These two branches of a common stock, Hebrew in the east, and Egyptian in the west, were the principal languages of the then civilized world.

Accordingly, the most ancient Babylonian inscriptions belong to the same stock of dialects with the book of Genesis. They are autographs of a date earlier than half of its contents.

It is also to the point to add, that the Chaldees, among whom Abraham's father dwelt, are, by the earliest information we obtain of them, presented as an eminently learned people; while the ruins of their buildings, recently exhumed, give evidence of a literary

taste, and zeal for the perpetuation of their records, hardly inferior to that of Egypt.

Terah's family was just of the kind to value most highly such an art, being neither degraded by the pressure of poverty, nor enfeebled by the frivolities of luxury. They were pious, sensible men, of a regal style of thinking and acting, as well as of nomadic simplicity of manners—just such men as were most likely to have the best education that was going. And they most probably followed the manners and customs of their ancestry.

Writing has from ancient time been the favorite art of the sons of Shem. We do not mean to say that every tribe of them, in every age, has possessed skill therein; but the great divisions of the people have, from time immemorial, cherished it as an ethnic feature. Most remarkably have they been the people of the book. A book has, in all recorded ages, been their rallying point—their national centre. Even in the present day, sunk as they are, crushed under the weight of ages of degeneracy, scattered refugees over the face of the world, wherever you find a little neighborhood of the sons of Israel, you find readers—readers of the ancient language of Canaan. And even among the savages of Africa, the wandering or trading Arab has carried his national art of the pen.

When Ezra edited the sacred books accumulated in his time, he did not presume to pick and choose among them, and to say what should be preserved and what not. Much less did he make a book of his own out of

their materials. So when the books of the New Testament were arranged together they were reverently preserved in their respective forms, which had been given them under the dictate of inspiration. No hand dared to remodel them, or to leave out what might be deemed unnecessary repetition in one book of what had already been contained in another.

Now, if Moses could be shown to have done with previous books what later hands did not with later Scripture, we should be at a loss to account for it, and consequently are not prepared to admit that he did so, unless the fact is well proved. But it is not proved, it is only conjectured. Under the conditions, the conjecture is inadmissible.

It might be said that the inspiration which guided the hand of Moses would give authority to his selections and alterations. So was Ezra inspired, but he did not presume to alter what God had revealed to others.

Moreover, it is inconsistent with analogy to assume that God first revealed a series of writings, and then subsequently ordained another person to modify or amend them, or to select some of them and reject others.

The use of the words Jehovah and Elohim, are all perfectly consistent with the integrity of the respective parts in their original form.

The book must be taken for what it appears and professes to be, unless it can be shown to be something else. It appears and professes to be a series of histories.

All attempts to prove it a vision, or a tradition, or anything else than it professes to be, turn out to be hopelessly lame. Consequently I hold that it is history.

Now, when we come to look at the book of Genesis, and consider its substance and structure, we find that view completely sustained. It is not a single composition, but a collection of smaller books, as the whole Bible itself is. Its structure, in fact, is just that of the Bible, on a smaller scale. The different parts of which it consists, have, in all cases but one, their respective titles, after the usual Hebrew manner, and all of them their proper unity and completeness, arising from an obvious purpose to that end. The oneness of historical effect, in their chronological arrangement, is similar to that of the whole Bible, and independent of any intention in the persons who wrote its parts.

The shape of these parts and their respective symmetry forbid the hypothesis that the book is a reconstruction out of previously existing docum nts. Each part is complete in itself, having its own proper beginning, subject, and appropriate close, as well defined, and after the same manner as the later books of Hebrew Scripture. You may call them books, or sections, or parts, or what you will; we have their own authority for calling them books: one of the very earliest of them, Gen. v. 1, calls itself the Book of the Generations of Adam; in the word *sepher* employing a term which cannot be mistaken for anything short of writing; and by their very titles and shape they declare themselves to be of independent construction. Take

any one of them and publish it apart, and it will tell its own story from beginning to end, and be found to stand in as independent a literary position as the book of Joshua or of Ruth. Each one of them bears every appearance of being now all that it ever was.

Genesis has no appearance of being a reconstruction from the materials of more ancient documents. It is the collection, in chronological order, of the ancient books themselves, without further trace of editorial work than that of modernizing the diction and prefixing the conjunction, in some cases, by way of linking the consecutive books together. The division into chapters, and even the older Hebrew division into sections, is one obviously made at later time by persons who paid no attention to the original structure. Both these divisions, at different periods of the history of the book, have covered up and disguised its real proportions by designating it with new marks upon a different principle: as sometimes we find works of ancient architectural art overlaid with plaster, and marked with the features of another order by some later hands. We must break away the plaster and search beneath it for the moldings which reveal the original design. In like manner, by neglecting the division into chapters, and studying that of the original books, we shall obtain a much clearer idea of the nature and effect of the whole series.

Another evidence that we have the ancient inspired books, and not a reconstruction by any later hand, is that, in some cases they are found to overlap each oth-

er, the introduction of one book running briefly over the ground already traversed by its predecessor; as if originally standing by itself, it recognized the propriety of preparing the ground for its own position, which would not have been the case had it been composed consecutively with the preceeding, as part of one work.

In all, this canon of early Scripture consists of eleven books. The first extends from the beginning of the first chapter to the third verse of the second chapter, and contains the account of creation until the earth was prepared for the habitation of man, and the work crowned by the formation of man in the image of God. This first of existing books surpasses all that have been since composed, in grandeur of manner and of conception. It opens without a title, without a preface, in majestic simplicity, by a sentence which declares the birth of the universe. Its subject is of the order in which God made the heavens and the earth, and majestically as it opens, so it closes with the day on which God rested from all his works of creation. No other passage of Scripture bears more deeply the mark of having been not only inspired, but dictated by the Creator himself. It is a revelation, not adapted to the Hebrew alone, but to the whole human race, instructing them in the position to which they have been assigned in the order of the universe. They are created as the ministers of God upon this globe during the period of its rest from the mighty revolutions of creation. Having in all ages sustained the flight of devotion, this part of Scripture has also, in later time, served a most valu-

able purpose in science, by resisting tendencies to error, and constraining effort into the proper direction, where large results of truth reward the toils of investigation. And in this latter field we are convinced that its value is still far from being fully apprehended.

The opening of the second book is marked by a separate title, and treats again of the creation of man, but enters more particularly into the manner of it. For the subject is here of primal man, his original state of holiness, how he fell from it, the wretched consequences of that fall upon himself and his children, until the birth of Seth, in whose descent should come the Saviour. It extends from the fourth verse of the second chapter to the end of the fourth chapter. This history, complete in itself, is also of equal interest to all mankind, setting forth, as it does, the origin of that evil which is in the world, and the remedy for it, in calling upon the name of the Lord.

The third book is the genealogy of Seth, starting once more from the creation of man, and briefly recapitulating its principal facts. It records the degeneracy of men among the descendants of that pious patriarch, with the honorable exceptions of Enoch and Noah, and comes down to the five hundredth year of Noah's life on the verge of the flood. And there, as an antediluvian genealogy, it properly comes to a close. Of the the fourth book, which extends from the ninth verse of the sixth chapter to the end of the ninth chapter, the single subject is the history of the deluge, and it closes with a few brief statements touching the subsequent life of Noah, and the date of his death.

In the fifth, which includes from the beginning of the tenth chapter to the ninth verse of the eleventh, we have the most valuable ethnological record in existence—positively the key of general history. It treats of the distribution of the family of Noah, with the original cause of their dispersion. Like all the rest, it has every element of a complete work. Nor should we overlook the internal evidences of its antiquity; first, that it makes mention of Sodom and Gomorrha in such a manner as to show that when it was written those cities were still in existence, and occupying a distinguished position in the civil geography of Canaan; secondly, that, in its account of national settlements, it contains no name known to have arisen at a subsequent period; and thirdly, that although belonging to a series of records chiefly concerned with the descendants of Shem, it gives as much space to the settlements of Ham as to all the rest of mankind together. Evidently its writer was deeply impressed with the existing superiority of that race, as in the present day a similar treatise would give most room to the Japhetic. When that book was composed, the sons of Ham were still the masters of the world. God's judgments had not yet fallen upon them, and Sodom and Gomorrha, Admah and Zeboim were still in the unchecked career of worldly prosperity and vice.

From this point it was no longer consistent with the purpose of revelation to carry forward the history of the whole race. Accordingly, the stream of narrative is confined to the descendants of Shem through Arphaxad.

And the sixth book, from the tenth verse of the eleventh chapter to the twenty-sixth verse of the same, presents the genealogical series from Shem to Abram, with whom it closes. It is merely a genealogical list, kept undoubtedly by the hereditary care of the ancestors of Abram. The seventh book is the life of that patriarch, and the most beautiful example of ancient story. Its object being throughout to set forth the call and faith of Abram, and the blessing which rested upon him and was promised to his seed, it properly comes to a close, at the eleventh verse of the twenty-fifth chapter, with the death of Abraham and the transfer of the blessing, according to promise, to his son Isaac. The eighth is a brief account of the family of Ishmael. And the ninth contains a fuller and more circumstantial history of Abraham's son according to the promise. Isaac's quiet and comparatively stationary life, however, occupies less space than do the adventures and animosities of his two sons. And the book closes, at the end of the thirty-fifth chapter, with his death, and the final reconciliation of his sons over his grave. The tenth, consisting of the thirty-sixth chapter, contains the genealogy of the descendants of Esau, and lists of their princes. It is composed of six different lists, is longer and more circumstantial than any other in this portion of Scripture, and bears marks of having been enlarged at some subsequent time. Nothing is more natural than that such additional facts should have been appended, inasmuch as, of all their kindred, the Edomites were the most intimately connected with Israel, and these facts of their early his-

tory could not be inserted in a more proper place. And the eleventh book is the history of Jacob, from the time when he came to the patriarchal succession, together with the adventures of his children, until his death in Egypt, and princely funeral in Canaan, and closes with a brief account of the circumstances in which he left his family, until the death of Joseph. Here the early records come to an end. A long interval of silence succeeded. The sojourn among foreigners, and ultimately the hard bondage to which they were subjected, long crushed the Hebrew taste for letters, and in their degradation the Divine vision was withheld, until Moses was providentially prepared and miraculously called to effect their deliverance.

Whoever were the penmen of it, the book of Genesis was composed after the manner of all the rest of Scripture, by successive additions of book to book.

The primal epoch of revelation to which it pertains was separated from its successor by a long period of degeneracy; and a similar degeneracy intervened between the close of the revelations belonging to the Mosaic epoch, and those which opened the Christian. In both these intervening periods the written word kept the spirit of the church alive. During the first dispensation the church existed only in the families of the faithful. And the whole series of revelation pertaining to it is addressed to that state of society. In the second, the people constituting the church had become a nation, and needed a code of national law and a land to dwell in. Accordingly the second series of revealed books

consists chiefly of national laws, national instruction, and national history. Moses was the highly honored instrument in writing out that law, which was to constitute the church into a separate nation: certainly the loftiest position that statesman ever occupied. In the third period, the church is prepared to be more than a nation. It is now the kingdom of heaven, and the books addressed to it are of a correspondingly higher spirituality and catholicity. In all three, the character of the sacred books is adapted to that of the dispensation. Thus a comprehensive view of the whole series of Scripture, as connected with the history of the church, goes to corroborate the more minute considerations of archaic criticism.

As the Bible of the Mosaic church closed its canon four hundred years before Christ, so the patriarchal series ended, at least, one hundred and fifty years before Moses was called in the desert of Horeb. The three different classes of books constituting our sacred canon, are remarkably separated from each other by these two intervening periods of silence. And as towards the close of the second, critics and copyists were raised up to collect, examine, and arrange, for the more careful preservation, the books then accumulated, so Moses, or some other pious and learned man, had discharged a similar office for the earlier canon, as the first dispensation drew towards its close. And when that early Scripture passed through the hands of Moses, as it certainly did, such was the reverence with which he regarded it, that, though he may have modernized its

diction,* and adjusted its arrangement, he did not presume to make a new book out of its materials, but transmitted it just as he found it, leaving each book in its original form, as Ezra, at a later time, edited the fuller collection, and as we now edit the whole series when complete.

In what we call the book of Genesis, then, we have the Bible of the patriarchal church—the Bible of the church before Moses, containing literary productions from the earliest ages of our race, and the only extant historical authorities of the first two thousand years. It contains the patriarchal creed in that shape which was best adapted to the instruction of patriarchal times. Even before its narrative has got beyond the first sons of Adam, it has exhibited these fundamental doctrines: That God created the heavens and the earth; that God made man in his own image, in righteousness and true holiness; that man, though able to remain holy, was free to sin; that he did sin, and thereby involved himself and all his posterity in condemnation and misery; that human suffering is the consequence of sin; that God had provided a way of salvation through the blood of sacrifice, and that whosoever worshipped him thereby would be accepted, but that to any other attempt to approach him he would have no respect.

* Occasionally we find ancient names followed by the explanation in the more recent name, as if the editor had not felt free to modernize the whole so far as to leave out the old and substitute the new, but preferred to retain the old, appending the new by way of explanation. Thus "Bela, (the same is Zoar.)" "Kiriath arba, (the same is Hebron,)" &c.

Succeeding revelations made progressively fuller exposition of the way of redemption, uncovering the subordinate features of that great mystery as the minds of men were prepared for it; but even for the family which first sinned, its essential outlines were distinctly drawn. Revelation has, from the beginning, been in every age a code of complete religious instruction in what God required of his people at that time, always adapted to the particular shape of the existing dispensation, and each preceding portion the most admirable preparation for that which was to follow, while possessing its own permanent value as a part of the whole.

Scripture is not only a revelation of God's will touching sinners, it is also a contemporaneous history of the various steps in the unfolding of the plan of redemption from the earliest day that man needed redemption, until in the fulness of time it was completed. To the first narrative left by the first narrator was added that of some other holy man, then that of another, and another, until that dispensation drew to an end. Then followed another and broader dispensation under the instruction of another series of inspired books, similarly adapted to it. And, finally, the Christian dispensation completed the order with a similar collection of sacred books, similarly adapted to its spirit and place, when it is found that the library, thus accumulated in the course of thousands of years, has been designed by the Holy Spirit, who inspired it, in the shape of one complete and symmetrical book. Thus it is that God effects the unity of his works. When man would make a plant assume a

particular shape of his choice, he imprisons its growth within some hard material casing; when God would do so, he wills it, and the plant, obedient to the mandate, springs spontaneously into the shape designed, but with a native grace and finish which it transcends the power of art to confer.

VIII.

CHINESE SACRED CANON.

An extravagant antiquity was at one time claimed for Chinese writing, which real acquaintance with the sober records has conclusively set aside; but, after all, reliable evidence exists to prove that books were written in China at a date as early as two thousand years before the Christian era.

Most of those ancient books have perished, but selections from several have been collected and arranged, and preserved with the utmost care. Of all now extant, the oldest are the holy books of the national religion. They are of two classes: the canonical, held to be the highest authority in all religious matters, and those of the ancient philosophers. To the former belong five books called by the common name *King*, namely, the *Yih*, the *Shoo*, the *She*, the *Le-ke*, and the *Ch'un-ts'ew;* to the latter class, four books called collectively *Shoo*, the first of which consists of conversations of Confucius; the second called the "Great learning," is attributed

to Tsang-sin, a disciple of Confucius; the third, called the "Doctrine of the mean," was written by a grandson of the same illustrious philosopher, and the fourth contains the works of Mencius, a philosopher of a subsequent generation. These are the great classics now in course of publication by Dr. Legge at Hongkong. The work presents the original text with an English translation and notes.

In the five *King*, or sacred scriptures of China, there is no assumption of inspired authority, nor of support by miracles; but their authors, it is believed, were possessed of a wisdom and moral goodness never, in other cases, vouchsafed to man. As they now stand, these books, with one exception, are only a selection from the more ancient sacred literature, put together by the editorial care of Confucius, the sanctity of whose character conferred upon them the last impress of authority.

After the period of early traditional prosperity followed many ages of moral and religious declension. Literature increased, but the teaching of the sacred books was neglected. It was in the sixth century before Christ that Confucius, deeply affected by the ignorance and degeneracy rapidly overspreading the country, devoted himself to the work of reviving those books and of effecting a moral reformation. It was an epoch in which several illustrious philosophers appeared, in whose hands the old hereditary faith and worship were treated with great speculative freedom, similar to that with which Christianity has been expounded by some of its recent philosophers. Lau-tze, an older con-

temporary of Confucius, was also the founder of a sect. But his speculations being of the transcendental type, not unlike the earlier philosophy of Schelling, were too far removed from the common understanding to become popular, and the comparatively small body of his followers accepted his doctrines in various senses, and in the course of time blended them with incongruous superstitions. The Tau-teh-king, the classic of reason and virtue, is the book which contains the sum of his recorded instructions. It has recently been put into an English dress by Mr. John Chalmers, one of the English missionaries at Canton.

Confucius is distinguished among the religious teachers of China by his worldly and practical character. All religion in his handling is brought down to the business of daily life and estimated by its temporal benefits. A rationalist of the common sense type, he made no pretension to knowledge of supernatural things, and even advised his followers not to concern themselves with inquiries about the nature of God, but to learn well and practice faithfully their own duties in their respective places, and especially to give attention to political knowledge, as the path to usefulness and honor. Thus eminently qualified to secure a place in the esteem of so worldly a people as the Chinese, he has also credit for scrupulous honesty in his treatment of the records which he used in his editorial labors.

All the extant books called *King* belong to a higher antiquity, and passed through the hands of Confucius, as their editor, except the Ch'un-ts'ew, which is said to

have been compiled by him from earlier documents, and the additions afterwards made to the Le-ke, or book of rites. The Chinese have full confidence in Confucius, that from the ancient books he selected the best, and all the essential truth, which they contained, and that he honestly refrained from tampering with the meaning. The five *King*, accordingly, as they came through his hands, were accepted as true portions and the most valuable of the ancient sacred canon.

But these books were not permitted to remain as Confucius left them. In the latter part of the third century before Christ, the head of the tyrannical dynasty of Ts'in ascended the imperial throne (220—200 B. C.), and, with a view to secure his house in dominion, determined to obliterate all monuments of earlier history. The sacred books were committed to the flames, and all destroyed that the officers of government could lay their hands on. But some copies were carefully concealed by zealous believers in them; and when the despotic dynasty came to an end, and another arose favorable to national religion and intelligence, every effort was made to collect and republish all that could be found. Numerous collections were made of the various books, and the greater part of the whole recovered, and in 135 B. C. put in charge of a regular committee of literary men appointed by the crown. Subsequent "dynasties have considered the literary monuments of the country to be an object of their special care. Many of them have issued editions of the classics, embodying the commentaries of preceding generations.

No dynasty has distinguished itself more in this line than the present Manchew possessors of the empire. In fine, the evidence is complete that the classical books of China have come down from at least a century before our Christian era, substantially the same as we have them at present." *

In the history of the nine great classics, the central figure is Confucius. The more ancient come through his hands and with his sanction, and the later were his production or those of his immediate successors. China, both before and since that epoch, has been the possessor of a copious literature, but these nine books have, for the last two thousand years, held their place, as classics above comparison with any other, the first five as the religious standards containing the ancient hymns and prayers, the rites and ceremonies, and the remains of ancient history, and the four as the classical authorities in philosophy.

The religions now mentioned, namely those observed on the sites of ancient Hamitic and Semitic civilization, between the Tigris and the Nile, that of the Avesta and the Veda among the Aryan nations of Persia and India; and Buddhism, also in India, but far more extensively among the Turanian tribes of central and eastern Asia; and that preserved in the ancient books of China, were the principal religions of the ancient world. To know their doctrines is really to know the doctrines held by mankind. Europe has always, in ancient as in modern times, derived her creed and ceremonial from the East.

* Legge's "Chinese Classics," vol. i.; "Prolegomena," p. 6.

And the superstitions of the small remaining percentage, to judge of the past from the present, were, as they certainly now are, only degenerate types, not to be overlooked in the study of religion, but of insignificant weight in a comparative view.

CHAPTER IV.

FRUITS OF RECENT SCHOLARSHIP.

THAT the world has not until recently been in condition to make a fair comparison of its great religious standards is due to the vastness of the work needed for removal of the difficulties by which they were surrounded. The actual religions of mankind had to be inquired of, as to which of them were in possession of any reasonable account of themselves. Access to much of that knowledge had to be acquired by ages of exploration. Great nations had to be conquered or conciliated; their living languages to be mastered, and then, through these, the languages of their sacred books, imperfectly known, and in some cases altogether unknown to themselves. Some languages had to be exhumed bodily from the tombs of the long departed generations who spoke them, their very alphabet to be rediscovered. And to many steps in that progress there was nothing to guide anticipation, except the successive fruits of labor.

Christendom has long been aware of the existence of some of the heathen books mentioned above, but the discovery of the whole is the work of recent research, combined with a learning of unparalleled breadth and enterprise.

Within the same time scholarship has itself under-

gone an important change. Although concerned with things of the past, and, rehandling the same material continually, it is as the husbandman recultivates the same soil, obtaining from it yearly new crops; and as superior skill gives to the old landscape new features, or draws from it a new kind of produce; so special talents addressed to pursuits of learning unearth from the ruins of the past new treasures, or make such a disposal of the old as to constitute them a real addition to the wealth of the present.

Hand in hand with science and art, scholarship has been largely promotive of the culture and comforts of modern times, and has not failed in a progress of her own, passing readily to one style of work when another is done. In the 14th and 15th centuries, employed in reviving the study of the Greek and Latin classics and the original text of Holy Scripture; in the 16th and early part of the 17th, in unfolding the structure of those languages in themselves, with their respective traditions and history, and the cognate languages of the Hebrew, and with these weapons fighting in the war of the Reformation; in the latter part of the 17th and onward turning all to the service of a new and rapidly increasing literature, by the end of the 18th it had reached to a minuteness of criticism, fast descending to pedantry, when new fields began to open and new principles to be unfolded leading into a career of discovery, which throws all previous attainment into the shade.

The last quarter of the eighteenth century, together with the first twenty years of the nineteenth, was a transition-period, during which a number of scholars,

in various quarters, incidentally, though for the most not without long persevering labor, fell in with interesting discoveries, outside of the old and beaten track or deep beneath it, and a few by what was deemed an erratic taste, chimerical and unprofitable, pursued the study of languages entirely foreign to both the sacred and classical affinities. The singular capacity and enthusiasm of Sir William Jones carried him into the world of unexplored or but partially explored languages, like a young knight errant in quest of adventures. Others followed in the same spirit, great linguists, like Leyden and Murray, who without any apprehension of language as the science, which it is, and only groping blindly after general principles, labored to grasp as many as possible of the idioms of the world. In this kind of attainment, the most extraordinary was Dr. Alexander Murray, professor of oriental languages in the university of Edinburgh, who closed his brief career of thirty-seven years in 1813. Others occupied themselves in making collections of words and of specimen translations of the Lord's Prayer from various quarters, such as had often been made before as matter of curiosity. Of that kind the greatest were the works of Pallas and of Adelung. The former composed by order of the Empress Catharine II. of Russia, and published in 1787 and 1789, contained two hundred and seventy-three words in two hundred languages. The "Mithridates," commenced by J. C. Adelung and continued by Professor Vater and Frederick Adelung, from 1806 to 1817, was designed to present a general view of the relations of all languages to the

members of their respective groups. It was a great step towards science, in that the languages were all arranged in classes and subdivisions; but necessarily superficial, as not founded upon a true basis of comparative study.

Of similar import were the attempts to arrive at principles of universal grammar and of the formation of language, in such works as the "Hermes," "Monde Primitif," and "Diversions" of Purley. Conjectural, fanciful, and fruitful of little but possibilities, as they were, those feelings after a science of language, as alchemy stumbled into chemistry, had much to do with the early thinking of men who subsequently effected more solid work.

Christian missionaries among the heathen, with the purpose of reaching truly, and without risk of mistake, the understanding and convictions of those to whom they were sent, found it indispensable to begin with thorough exploration of the dialects they had to use. No mere hypothesis, however beautiful, would answer their purpose, nothing but positive fact and practical principle. Collection of the actual words spoken around them, discrimination of the relations actually observed in the use of those words and of the meanings which the people understood in them were closely to be pursued. These labors soon extended into the production of complete dictionaries and grammars of a great variety of tongues, some of them never presented in letters before. Protestant missions to the heathen, in their present systematic style, commenced only in the last years of the eighteenth century. But brief as is the inter-

vening period, the ethnological, as well as philological, material thus collected has now accumulated to an enormous amount. And Bible societies, following the footsteps of missionary enterprise, have turned all to the account of introducing into every dialect, thus mastered, a translation of the Holy Scriptures. Catholic missionaries have, no doubt, furnished men of learning equal to the Protestant; the Jesuits Schall, De Nobilis, and Beschi have perhaps never been excelled in the learning proper to their respective fields; but Protestant missionaries, from their labors to render the Word of Revelation and other religious books into all languages, have produced a reflex benefit to the learning of the Christian world. Those translations, while carrying divine truth to the heathen, have brought the languages of previously illiterate races to the knowledge of Christian scholars. In missionary dictionaries, grammars, translations, a complete apparatus has been provided for the study of many a form of human speech which should otherwise have remained unknown. Moreover, the reports furnished by the missionaries to their respective churches as well as occasional correspondence, published in their periodicals, have added in a similar and still larger degree to the mass of ethnological knowledge, which is continually increasing. Of all workers at the foundations of ethnical science, the most productive are the Christian missionaries.

The demands of a commerce, which now follows the coasts of the ocean, have created a remunerative occupation for men whose natural gifts or attainments give them facility in the use of various languages. In the

British colonial service and foreign trade the dialects of all the principal nations of the world, and of many of the inferior, are called into requisition. And similar, if not so extensive or imperious, are the demands of national and commercial business under the governments of Russia, France, and America.

Large collections of material naturally suggest classification and completeness. Expeditions have been undertaken at the expense of governments and by individuals with their own means, to complete the survey of the earth's surface, of its inhabitants, of their languages, and of all else that is most interesting about them. And foundations for the science of language have been laid, which, though far from complete, are at least certain and immovable.

In that structure the corner-stone was knowledge of the Sanskrit, for which we are indebted to the British rule in India. True, the first Europeans of modern times to become acquainted with that ancient tongue were some of the Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century; but their knowledge was unproductive of any general interest in the subject. After the conquest of Bengal in the battle of Plassey in 1757 and by the treaty of Allahabad in 1765, the East India Company resolved to govern their Hindu subjects in accordance with Hindu laws. But these were contained in the Sanskrit language. An epitome of the most important law-books was forthwith drawn up by a committee of Brahmans under appointment of the Governor-General Warren Hastings, and printed in London in 1776. Several officers in the Company's service proceeded to

qualify themselves to make use of the original sources. Knowledge of Sanskrit became indispensable to the completeness of a legal education under that government. But the distinct beginning of the pursuit as a branch of scholarship was made by Sir William Jones, H. T. Colebrooke, Sir Charles Wilkins, and one or two other British residents of Bengal, who, in 1784, formed the Asiatic Society at Calcutta. In the first instance, those gentlemen proceeded, with the aid of learned Brahmans, to master the books of law and works of elegant Sanskrit literature, implicitly following the instructions of the Sanskrit grammars, vocabularies, and commentaries, which had all to be translated for them by their pundits. Subsequently, as they grew into fuller understanding of the language, they felt free to shape their knowledge more into accordance with European science, and prepared an easier path for their successors by the compilation of grammars in the English. A dictionary, Sanskrit and English, was an arduous undertaking, and, although commenced early and by several persons, collecting from the native vocabularies, was not completed until taken up anew from the beginning by Professor Wilson, it was brought out in 1819.

The first illustrious group of laborers was followed by another, which grew up under the instruction thus accumulating. Meanwhile, the subject had secured for itself an interest among the scholars of Germany, France, and Denmark, by whom it was handled philosophically from the beginning. But the current deepened as it flowed. Commencing with the slender, but enthusiastic

orientalism of Frederick Schlegel, it soon enlarged into the profound and far-reaching criticism of Bopp and Burnouf. The study of Sanskrit is still prosecuted with zeal and progressive success; and in most of the universities of Europe professors are employed to teach it. One after another, departments of its literature, at one time utterly impracticable, have been interpreted, and to some degree by the help of that science which itself was the first to suggest. Still in the hands of a gifted few, among whom are to be counted Weber, Lassen, Whitney, and Müller, Sanskrit scholarship is every year adding to its skill and the mass of its information

At first the books studied were those written in the later Sanskrit, with which the pundits were best acquainted. The more ancient were held sacred, and submitted to foreign inspection with great reluctance, and as it afterwards appeared, were imperfectly understood by the most learned Brahmans, while to the greater number they were entirely unreadable. For the Sanskrit is a dead language, and in its oldest form was obsolete at least six hundred years before the Christian era.

It is in the attainments leading to a knowledge of those ancient books that the most valuable philological gains have been made as well as the most important for the study of religion. Only of recent years have the difficulties of the Veda, its obsolete dialect and antiquated allusions, been handled with success. The Sanhita, or collection of hymns, of the Sama-Veda has been rendered into English by Mr. Stevenson. And a

translation of the hymns of the Rig-Veda was one of the last enterprises of the late Professor H. H. Wilson. An edition of the original text of the latter has just been completed in England by Prof. Max Muller, at the expense and by the direction of the East India Company. Translations of some of the hymns have appeared in the "History of Sanskrit Literature," by the same eminent scholar, who now advertises his intention to translate all the hymns as far as he deems their meaning to be ascertainable.

To the mind of Sir Wm. Jones, richly furnished with Greek, Latin, Persian and other lore, the very first acquaintance with Sanskrit suggested the idea of new and most interesting linguistic affinities. He augured truly of its importance as throwing light upon the classical languages of Greece and Italy, but could not conceive of the breadth of its scientific value. Standing in such relation as it does to the idioms of Persia, Armenia, and Europe, Sanskrit has become the key to the deepest mysteries of the whole class, the generative principle of comparative philology. Interpretation has taken a higher stand and proceeds with a firmer criticism. Etymology is no longer a play of fancy with accidental similarity of sounds. If not yet a perfect science, it is at least pursued scientifically. Much universal truth of language has been ascertained positively and forever, and classified according to relations intrinsic to the subject. The Semitic languages and those which extend from the Ganges, by way of Persia, Armenia, and the whole breadth of Europe and both continents of America to the Pacific ocean, have been

explored in the light of the newly discovered relations: and much has been done towards bringing the Chinese and its cognates under the same scientific treatment.

In like manner the Zend-Avesta, or Holy Scripture of the ancient Persians, for many ages a sealed book to even the hereditary and jealous priesthood who protected it from destruction, has been rendered once more intelligible by the same comparative criticism. Preserved from ancient time by the remnant of the Parsees still living in India about Bombay, where their fathers found refuge from Mohammedan persecution in Persia, it speaks a language which those who believe in it had entirely forgotten. The words which the Parsee repeats in his worship had, until recently, no longer any significance to his mind, and only a traditional and ritual import in practice. The greater was the difficulty to European scholars, when first their attention was turned to the subject. And their attention could not fail to be turned to it when Europeans became masters of Bombay. No pundits were to be obtained to explain the words or the laws of that forgotten tongue. English residents at Bombay and in the neighborhood first made modern Europe acquainted with the existence of the Parsee manuscripts, some of which were brought to England and deposited in public libraries, but without any attempt being made, for many years, to decipher them. In 1754, Anquetil du Perron, a young Frenchman, then pursuing oriental studies at Paris, obtained sight of some fac-similes from those manuscripts, and fired with zeal, determined to go out to India and learn their meaning from the priests of their religion, little

dreaming that the priests themselves could be ignorant of it. Being poor, he enlisted as a soldier among the troops going out in the French service to Pondicherry. His character and purpose were discovered before he left France, and other and better means of attaining his end were provided for him. The enterprise resulted successfully. After many adventures, in various parts of India and a residence of several years among the Parsees at Surat, he returned to Paris with copies of their sacred books, and a translation of them made by himself with the aid of Parsee priests, not from the original, but from a modern Persian version. His work, containing an account of his labors and travels and translation of the Zend-Avesta, appeared in 1771 in three quarto volumes. It was full of mistakes of the gravest nature. But a real translation of the Avestan text was at that time impossible. And the work of Anquetil, with all its errors, continued to furnish the only idea which the world had of the Parsee sacred books until a few years ago.

A more thorough knowledge of Sanskrit, and especially of its most ancient Vedic dialect, was needed in order to comprehend the language in which those books were written. And much had to be done in settling the principles of comparative philology before the intimate affinities of those two languages were found out, or it was conceived that a knowledge of the one would be any introduction to the other. To that end, the oriental researches of Rask and Olshausen, eminent Danish scholars, and the comparative grammar of Bopp led the way. A little treatise, "On the Age

and Genuineness of the Zend Language and the Zend-Avesta," was published by Rask in 1826. He was one of the earliest European students of Sanskrit, and "a general linguistic investigator of rare talents and acquirements." He had travelled in Persia and India, and had brought home to Copenhagen a valuable collection of Avestan manuscripts. His essay was far in advance of anything that had yet appeared, for establishing the character and value of the Avesta and the relations of its language: it included also a very greatly improved analysis and determination absolute and comparative of the alphabet of the latter. In the same year, Olshausen, a professor in the university of Kiel, was sent by the Danish government to Paris, to examine and collate the Avestan manuscripts lying there, and upon his return the publication of a critical edition of the Vendidad, "one of the three great divisions of the Avesta," was commenced by him. Its first part containing four Fargards, or "chapters," appeared in 1829, a lithographed text with full critical apparatus; but nearly the whole edition was soon after destroyed by fire, and the prosecution of the undertaking was abandoned. Olshausen's material has since passed into the hands of Spiegel. In the year of that calamity, 1829, there appeared in the Asiatic Journal of Paris "the first contribution to the study of the Avesta" from a scholar destined to "do more than any, or all others to place that study upon a true and abiding foundation; to whose investigations the progress of Avestan science was to be linked for many years to come. This was Eugene Burnouf. He was professor

of Sanskrit in the college of France, and already known as a zealous cultivator of the knowledge of the Orient, to which he had, in conjunction with Lassen, contributed, in 1826, the well-known "Essai sur le Pali." His attention became very naturally, at that period, directed toward the Zoroastrian texts; and a slight examination and comparison of them with the translation of Anquetil, led him at once to important results, with reference to the character of the latter. He found it highly inaccurate, and so full of errors as to be hardly reliable, even as a general representation of the meaning of its original. Among the manuscripts brought home by Anquetil, however, he found another translation, intelligible to him, which was plainly much more faithful than that of the French scholar." * It was a Sanskrit version of a part of the Avesta, namely the Yasna, made some three hundred years before Anquetil by two learned Parsee priests, Neriosengh and Ormuzdiar. Burnouf, accordingly, laid aside Anquetil, and commenced the Avesta anew with the aid of Neriosengh, and the Sanskrit language. In 1833 appeared the first volume of his proposed translation of the Yasna immediately from the original, with a copious commentary. In that work he undertook to "give an account of every word in the Zend text," "to parse every sentence, and establish the true meaning of each term," † by careful analysis, and by comparison with cognate words in Sanskrit. This large volume of

* Prof. Whitney in the "Journal of the American Oriental Society," vol. v. p. 362.

† Max Müller, "Chips from a German Workshop," vol. i. p. 138.

800 quarto pages covered only the first of the seventy-two brief chapters of which the Yasna consists. But its great importance lay in opening up the true avenue to the resolution of the difficulties surrounding the subject. Subsequently, the ninth chapter of the same book was treated in a similar manner: but after the year 1844 the author's attention was turned away to other investigations, not less difficult nor less important, which occupied him to the end of his days. Meanwhile, the method thus inaugurated was adopted and pursued by others, until, in the hands of Westergaard and Spiegel, the whole Avesta, in its text and substantial meaning, was laid before the public.

Westergaard, a Dane, professor of oriental languages in the university of Copenhagen, and one of the most learned Sanskrit scholars of his day, took up the task so well begun by his countrymen Rask and Olshausen. To all the collections of material at his hand in Europe he added a journey to Persia and India, in the course of which he considerably enlarged his manuscript sources. His work contemplated a critical edition of the whole Avestan text, a complete vocabulary and grammar of the Avestan language, pointing out its relations to other Iranian dialects with their history and European affinities, a translation of the whole Avestan canon, with critical notes, a view of the civil and religious institutions of the Parsees, and a history of the nations of Iran until the time of their overthrow by the Mohammedans. It was to be published at Copenhagen, but in the English language, as that of a larger public than the Danish. The first volume ap-

peared in 1852 and 1854, and contained the promised edition of the original text with critical notes, and a history of Avestan manuscripts and their preservation.

Dr. Spiegel, of the university of Erlangen in Bavaria, with similar attainments and possessed, to a great extent, of the same resources, undertook about the same time a similar enterprise. His edition of the text and translation came out simultaneously, the former at Vienna and the latter at Leipsic. The first volume of the translation appeared in 1852, the second in 1859, and the third, completing the work, in 1863, the various parts are accompanied with historical and critical introductions and notes in the German language, followed up by a commentary upon the whole in two volumes, the last of which has appeared since the beginning of the present year (1869).

Immediately after the publication of Spiegel's translation, a wealthy Parsee gentleman, resident in England, engaged a competent scholar to render it into English for the use of his countrymen. * Parsees are now furnished with the meaning of their own sacred books through the labors of European learning. What they had lost with their own ancient tongue, they have recovered through the language of foreigners.

Accordingly, it is only since 1859 that the sacred books of the Parsees can be said to have spoken in a modern tongue, or to have reached the understanding of a modern mind. The religion of that great people which burst upon history in the campaigns of Cyrus,

* Bleeck's translation of Spiegel's "Avesta."

and under Darius gave laws to the world, which held the dominion of western Asia, from India to Æthiopia, for two hundred years, and which, after many fluctuations of fortune remains a nation still, has never been presented to Europe in its true light until a few years ago. Greeks misunderstood it, Romans knew about it only what they learned from the Greeks, and Mohammedan conquest drove it into obscurity. The religion of Persia was represented, according to the fancy of writers, as a religion of Magi, as a worship of fire, as a polytheistic idolatry. Never, in Europe, has it spoken for itself until now: and now it appears that those charges were erroneous. The countrymen of Cyrus and Darius were not polytheists, and did not worship fire, nor any other idol, but one Almighty God. The result of investigation is the establishment of one of the grandest facts in the ancient history of religion. Why did Cyrus show such favor to the Jews? Among the idolators of Assyria and Babylonia, among idolators everywhere in his new dominions, he found this captive and scattered people the worshippers of one God, and recognized their cause, so far, as his own, and that of his own people. The voice of their God he accepted as that of his own. Why did Cambyses and his Persians treat the gods of Egypt with such bitter contempt but that they held them to be no gods?

Later changes in the religion of Persia have added much to the obscurity which has rested upon that ancient creed. Quite as effectually have Brahmanical corruptions concealed the true character of the old religion of India. Only within a few years has the

Veda surrendered any of its treasures to modern times. Even Brahmans had lost all true knowledge of their own scriptures. Nor have the learned presented us yet with the whole body of the latter in a version entirely satisfactory to themselves. Many of Professor Wilson's renderings of the Vedic hymns are conjectural; and it is also true that a number of the Avestan words Spiegel has simply transferred, without pretending to translate, as the translators of the English Bible have left such words as Selah, Neginoth and Maschil to the conjecture of the reader. More thorough is the rendering of the Avesta upon which Dr. Haug is now engaged, and of which he has recently published the "Gâthas" or sacred songs, which constitute the basis and most ancient part of the collection. Such is also to be said of Max Müller's translations of Vedic hymns contained in his "History of Sanskrit Literature;" and the highest anticipations may reasonably be entertained of his now projected version of the whole.

The earliest of the great achievements of modern hermeneutic art to secure popular recognition for itself was that which unlocked the secret of Egyptian hieroglyphics. To that discovery the key was found in the bilingual and triliteral inscription on the Rosetta stone. A broken slab of basalt inscribed with writing both Greek and Egyptian, and the Egyptian in both the hieroglyphic and popular characters, was discovered by the French soldiers in Egypt, while excavating at Rosetta to lay the foundations of a fort. It was captured by the English, while on the way to France, and deposited in the British Museum. Facsimiles were

thence distributed to the learned throughout Europe. Twenty years elasped from its discovery ere the value of it was understood. Dr. Young, an Englishman, made a beginning to decipher it, proceeding only a little way.

The real triumph in the Rosetta stone, after all, remained with France. It was in 1822 that Champollion produced his celebrated paper before the French Academy, in which he first unfolded the hieroglyphic as, in the main, a phonetic system. A new field was opened for research and a new life inspired into oriental studies. As the first of the labors which followed, we enjoy the antiquarian information contained in the voluminous works of Champollion, of Rosellini, of Wilkinson, of Lepsius, of Bunsen, of Brugsch, and of many others, in a series down to the present day, whereby we actually know more of life among the Egyptians of three thousand years ago than of our own German forefathers before Charlemagne.

None of the great achievements of recent scholarship could have been what it is standing by itself. They have all mutually sustained each other. Knowledge of hieroglyphic writing opened into an unknown language, the ancient Egyptian, and that had to be reached through the study of the Coptic, or Christian Egyptian, with the aid of its cognates. Sanskrit learning has thrown light upon the Zend, and the Zend upon the Sanskrit, and upon later Persian, and later Persian has reflected its light back into an earlier age. Deciphering of cuneiform writing and antiquarian research put their hands together to sustain the labors of comparative

philology; but without comparative philology neither of them could have uttered an intelligible meaning. While Rask and Westergaard, and Wilson and Burnouf, and Bopp and Lassen were laboring among the affinities of the Indo-European tongues, and slowly ascertaining the laws and significance of the ancient and sacred members of that class, which have been obsolete more than two thousand years, others were exploring the long forgotten alphabet of Assyria. Those writings, which had for ages challenged and defied the ingenuity of scholarship, might still have defied it, but for the new discoveries in the relationship of languages.

Among the ruins of the ancient cities of Babylonia, Assyria, and Persia, monuments are found inscribed with lines of characters shaped like wedges or arrow heads. These wedgelike strokes are drawn vertically, horizontally, and obliquely in groups and arranged in straight lines. Many such inscriptions have been recently disinterred; others stand open to the sky, on the walls of ruined palaces or temples and on tablets hewn in the mountains. Conspicuous among the latter is one near Kermanshah, on the western frontier of Persia. It is cut in the mountain of Behistun, upon the face of a perpendicular precipice, at the elevation of two hundred feet from the valley, and consists of a central picture with four hundred lines of cuneiform writing.

The earliest attempt to decipher those inscriptions attended with any success, was made by Professor Grotefend of Göttingen, in the beginning of the present

century. Without such help as Egyptologers had in the Rosetta stone, he succeeded, by an ingenious and careful process, in opening a brief and narrow, but reliable, path to their interpretation. It was well known from ancient authorities that, at Persepolis, there was a palace as well as burying place of the ancient kings of Persia. Extensive ruins on the site of that city presented every indication of belonging to a palace, and the inscriptions found upon it were reasonably referred to some of the great and prosperous among those kings. Of the inscriptions some were in the Pehlevi, or later Persian, and had been partly deciphered by De Sacy, who had found the titles and name of a king often repeated. It occurred to Grotefend as most probable that the cuneiform writings were also royal records of royal exploits. He then proceeded to assure himself that the ruins really belonged to the time of the Achæmenian kings. By comparing two groups of figures, which occurred frequently in the inscriptions, as to their length and general appearance, with all the names upon the list of Persian kings, he found that no two consecutive names corresponded to them save those of Darius and Xerxes. He next ascertained the spelling of those names in the old Persian language. That spelling was then compared with the groups. A step of conjecture had to be taken, and the smaller groups of arrow-heads so distributed as to correspond to the letters in the Persian spelling of those proper names. Several letters were thus conjecturally assumed and applied to other portions of the inscriptions; careful analysis being made of their elements. Slowly, and

through numberless failures, did the persevering decipherer establish one letter after another, until a considerable portion of the alphabet was determined.

It was in 1802 that Grotefend announced his first success; but it attracted little notice. His method was described in an appendix to the third edition of Heeren's "Ideen," published at Göttingen in 1815, and more fully in the English translation of that work, in 1833, when it first became known to English readers. So far, it had been unproductive. To this date must the real beginning of general interest in the subject be referred. Much earlier nothing could have been effected more than was done. But now Indo-European philology had assumed form and established some of its fundamental principles. Three years later, treatises on the cuneiform writing were issued by Professor Lassen of Bonn and Burnouf of Paris, corroborating Grotefend's method, and making additions to the twelve letters which he had discovered.

Meanwhile Major (now Sir Henry) Rawlinson, British resident at Kermanshah in Persia, had, in 1835, commenced the study of the actual monuments. Of the great inscription at Behistun, which, from its elevation at such giddy height, still remained uncopied, he secured a complete transcript by having himself suspended by ropes to the face of the precipice. Without knowledge of the coincident labors of Lassen and Burnouf, but like them versed in Sanskrit and Persian, and acquainted with Grotefend's progress, he reached the same conclusions to which they came, as appeared by his announcement from the borders of Persia, in the

same year. 1836, in which their treatises appeared in Europe. Lassen continued to pursue the subject in occasional articles in the "Journal for Oriental Knowledge." Rawlinson, two years later, sent to the Royal Asiatic Society his first communication on the Behistun inscription, in which he gave a transcript of its commencing paragraphs in Roman characters, with a translation, which was followed by a summary of the whole, with some further details touching the alphabet. In 1846 he came out with a full exposition of the Persian cuneiform system and a complete translation of the inscription at Behistun. From that date the Persian variety of the cuneiform writing must be regarded as mastered. Criticism may still question the accuracy of the rendering given to some particular word, or the power of some rarely occurring letter; but no reasonable doubt can any longer rest upon the substantial meaning of the translation, or the principles of the grammar of the dialect thus raised from the dead. All thus claimed as discovery has been severely criticised. By the uninformed of the principles and methods employed, it has generally been encountered with distrust, by some classical scholars disputed; but by those who have truly followed the process of deciphering, and best understand it, hailed as a real triumph. And the final test of its correctness is that everywhere, consecutively applied, it brings out a consistent grammatical meaning. In order to feel the weight of this fact let any one construct an alphabet false to the sounds employed in English words, and then try to decipher one English sentence, of ordinary length, by its means.

The alphabet whereby we read sentence after sentence and column after column, in true grammatical order, is a true alphabet. It is an argument which no man can resist who has experience of it. Dr. Spiegel, translator of the Avesta, has examined critically the work of his predecessors, and stamps the result with his approval. In a volume, published at Leipsic in 1862, he has summed up the results in a full translation of the Persian inscriptions, accompanied with the original text in Roman characters, a grammar and vocabulary of the language, with a brief history of the process whereby they have been ascertained.

Among the victories of modern scholarship no other has been achieved over so many difficulties and so obstinate. The unknown characters were accompanied by no key to explain their nature, whether ideographic or phonetic, or whether it had any other significance than that of ornamentation: and when first deciphered, they opened into an unknown tongue, where everything was strange, save the proper names. Interpretation could not have gone much further but for the attainments by that time made in knowledge of Vedic Sanskrit and Zend. Upon spelling the words of the inscriptions with the alphabet as deciphered, they were found to present a striking similarity to the latter. Further examination demonstrated them to belong to a dialect of Persian not far removed from that in which the sacred books of Zoroaster were written, and having, like that, a near affinity to the ancient Sanskrit. The Avesta was itself, at that date, yielding its meaning only stingily and by fragments as wrested from it by

the severest examination and cross-examination. A new witness was now introduced from the Persian monuments, at an important stage in the inquiry—a witness whose scanty but valuable testimony received indispensable explanation from that which it helped to explain.

Still, the work is far from being complete. Among several varieties of cuneiform writing only one is fully mastered. The external difference of style consists in different conformation and combination of the wedge-like strokes, and number of graphic signs, which correspond to underlying differences of language. The three varieties, which appear upon the trilingual tablets of Persia, are called by the names of Assyrian, or Babylonian, Scythian, or Turanian and Persian. Most ancient of all is the Turanian, next is the Assyrian, such as are found in the ruins of Nineveh and Calah, and most recent of all is the Persian. It is also the simplest, the lines being plain and regularly formed wedgeshape, and the alphabet limited to thirty-six characters. It is this variety which is satisfactorily explained. By its aid on the trilingual tablets, that is those on which all three varieties appear, some progress has been made in unraveling the difficulties of the other two. The Babylonian covers the Semitic tongue of Babylon and Assyria. The monuments exhumed by Mr. Layard from the ruins of Nineveh passed under the eye of Rawlinson, on their way to England. Having just then finished his work with the Persian inscriptions, that eminent scholar immediately turned his attention to those newly discovered, which had come to

light at the very juncture when there were men prepared to decipher them. The amount of material under this head is very extensive. Besides the great number of inscriptions dug up in the ruins of the cities of northern Assyria, a vast mass of tiles and cylinders covered with writing, real library tablets, are found in the ruins of Babylon. The former vary in size from eight inches by six to two inches by one and a half, or less, and the writing upon them is very minute, from six to ten lines in an inch, with occasionally words so much smaller that sixteen lines might be contained in an inch. They are made of hard dried clay. The cylinders are generally from four to seven inches long and six or ten in circumference; but many are larger, according to the length of the writing to be inscribed upon them. Such books, for they are really treatises on a great variety of subjects, have been discovered in thousands and are now deposited in the British and other museums of Europe. Although many are broken or defaced, yet a great number are in a state of perfect preservation. From time to time we hear from Sir Henry Rawlinson, as he makes some new addition to discovery in that field to which his investigations seem to be now chiefly addressed. Of the third variety less is known. It is thought, that it contains a language of the Turanian class.

As large additions have been made to the treasures of Assyrian and Babylonian monumental literature, since 1843, by the researches of Botta, Layard, and others among the ruins of ancient cities, lying scattered along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates, much

light has been thrown upon the otherwise lost history of those early seats of civilization.

A few years before and after 1820 constitute an era in the history of scholarship. Several of the enterprises, which have revolutionized, or greatly advanced their respective departments, were commenced, if not executed about that time. In 1819 appeared the first edition of Wilson's "Sanskrit Dictionary," making that language accessible to the scholar in his own study: also the first volume of Buttmann's "Large Grammar," entering upon a truly scientific treatment of the Greek language; and the first volume of Grimm's "German Grammar," a work which, in its completeness, presented a thorough comparative discussion of the German and Scandinavian languages, establishing and illustrating, for the first time, some of the most important principles of philological science. Three years before, Bopp had published his "Conjugation System of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Persian, and German Languages," in which he opened the history of comparative philology. In 1822, Champollion brought out his discovery in Egyptian hieroglyphics. In 1823 appeared Morrison's "Chinese Dictionary." In 1826, Burnouf and Lassen commenced their illustrious career with their joint treatise on the Pali, and Niebuhr was rising to the conception of his critical history, delivering his first course of lectures at Bonn. Within that epoch also the original text of the Buddhist sacred books first came before the eyes of a European.

Buddhism, in its history and many of its practices, had long been subject of discussion among the learned

of the West: and it had long been believed that it was originally an Indian religion, expelled from that country by hostility of the Brahmans; but it was not until the time now mentioned that Buddhism, as it expounds itself, was accessible. Its doctrines were received in Europe at second hand. The sacred books which teach them were unknown. That deficiency was now supplied, by a singular conjunction of events, from four different quarters at the same time. In 1824 Mr. Brian Houghton Hodgson, resident for the East India Company in Nepal, published his discovery of the original Sanskrit text of the Buddhist scriptures. He had procured a catalogue of all the volumes belonging to the priesthood of that country, and then copies of the books themselves, and fully ascertained their character, and that, when the Buddhist books were destroyed elsewhere in India, they had been preserved together with the religion which they teach, among the mountains of Nepal; and that, at a very early date, a translation had been made of them all into the language of Thibet. Copies of those books, to the number of about sixty volumes, Mr. Hodgson forwarded to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, from 1824 to 1839. Similar collections he presented also to the Asiatic Societies of London and Paris in 1841 and 1837, respectively. He published also, in 1841, a number of valuable essays on the literature and religion of the Buddhists.

At this juncture, Alexander Csoma de Koros, a Hungarian, appeared at Calcutta. He had travelled on foot from Hungary to Thibet, and thence into India. His journey, first undertaken from desire to ascertain the

origin of his own nation, had been delayed in Thibet by the interest which he took in the language, and subsequently in the literature and religion of that country. He now presented to the oriental scholars of Calcutta a valuable analysis of the religious books of Thibet, which was printed in the twentieth volume of the "Asiatic Researches." From that analysis, it was sufficiently established that the principal part of the Thibetan scriptures was a translation from the Sanskrit books, found by Mr. Hodgson in Nepal.

About the same time, Isaac Jacob Schmidt, of St. Petersburg, pursuing the study of the Mongolian language, found another version of the Buddhist books, from which he translated portions.

From 1826, English residents in Ceylon had occupied themselves with investigations into the literature of that island. These inquiries soon resulted in bringing to view a fourth set of Buddhist books, in this case written in the Pali, an ancient dialect of Sanskrit, and the sacred language of Ceylon. From these, as originals, are copied the sacred books of Burmah and Siam. Thus there are two great sources of Buddhist propaganda: the Sanskrit in the north, and the Pali in Ceylon. From the former have translations been made into the Thibetan, the Mongolian, the Manchu, the Chinese, and Japanese, and from the latter have they been carried into the peninsula of further India.

Large collections of Buddhist manuscripts have been taken to Europe, but little has yet been done in rendering them into any language of the West. Such a work was undertaken, in his own masterly manner, by Bur-

nouf. Taking the Sanskrit original for the basis, he compared it carefully with the different versions now put within his reach. The first fruit of that effort, printed in 1844, was a volume entitled "Introduction to the History of Buddhism." A second volume appeared after his death, in 1852, containing "a translation of one of the canonical books of Nepal," with valuable notes and appendices. That work remains where Burnouf left it; but several treatises have followed from different hands, on the religion and history of Buddhism, especially as it is in China, Tartary, Thibet, and Ceylon, and as it was anciently in India.

Much truth of history has also been elicited by careful comparison of ancient authorities, not merely on the broad ground of their ostensible subjects, but also in their incidental remarks and in what they often unconsciously imply; by bringing together matters of history really pertaining to the same head, but whose importance has hitherto been overlooked from their being scattered obscurely among the writings of miscellaneous authors, by carefully collecting, sifting, and weighing, as related to some general thread of history, fragments from the debris of ancient literature. Thus have many important facts been assigned to their proper places, and isolated portions of history exhibited in their true connection. Errors, probably, have been made, but some of old standing have been demonstrated and removed, and in other cases a history almost entirely lost has been to some degree restored. Utterly lacking as ancient India is in chronology, one or two epochs have by this minute criticism been established,

beyond all reasonable doubt. The history of ancient Rome has received, from the labors of Niebuhr and Momsen, a new interest and a higher value: Otfried Müller has almost raised from the grave the history of Orchomenos, and of the ancient Dorians; and Movers, in his "Phenicians," has effected almost a miracle of restoration by the same means. A new life has been breathed into the history of Greece, and the relations of the Hebrews to the world, as a religious people, have been exhibited with a breadth and power, which the traditionary historians never dreamed of. Minute and careful criticism of facts already possessed, has discovered in them, when combined according to their true relations, an amount of implied history, which in ordinary reading we should never have been aware that they possessed.

One of the distinguishing features of recent scholarship is universality. Not that any sensible man now aspires to know everything; but each branch of learning is conceived of as comprehending all that really belongs to it. Etymology, for example, is no longer limited to the changes upon words in a given language, but, in its scientific sense, comprehends the modifications and affections of words in all languages, and from language to language, the world over. History no longer contents itself with records of dynasties and governmental action, it descends to the manners and customs and events among the humblest, and aims to present a true picture of the whole life of a nation, in the light of universal principles.

A second feature is that the different departments of

learning have been brought nearer to each other: their borders overlap and constitute a mutual support. Philology has rendered important services to history, and both have sustained ethnology, while receiving help from it.

Clear and comprehensive thinking leads inevitably to science, which is just knowledge defined and classified. As the fruit of recent scholarship we have two distinct, yet nearly allied, sciences, namely those of language and of ethnology. And if history is not a science, recent scholarship has done more than anything else to bring it up towards that standing.

And, finally, the work of comparing the forms of human speech, leads to a similar comparison of the habits of human thinking, on the very top, as well as at the bottom of which lie the hopes and fears and beliefs of religion.

Thus, we have reliable witnesses on the subject of religion from the ancient civilization of eastern Asia, from that of the south and centre and south-west of the same continent, and from that of the adjoining part of Africa: in short, from all the great seats of pre-Hellenic culture. They are the oldest literary productions in existence. And among them the most ancient testimony is borne by the book of Genesis, some of the Egyptian and Babylonian monuments, the Rig-Veda and the Gathas of the Avesta. The monuments are fragmentary, like the headings of a chapter, a military bulletin, or an epitaph; the Rig-Veda and Gathas are hymns, Genesis alone presents the form of narrative. And whether preserved at first by writing

or by oral recitation, in whole or by parts, it retains also more of the historical character than any other to which a similar antiquity is ascribed. It also takes a much wider view of the world and of human life beyond the strict sphere of religion than does the Veda or the Avesta. Its chronology, if not at all points without difficulty, is at least continued from the earliest time without a serious break. The Veda and Avesta "take no note of time," and are recognized of the antiquity to which they belong by the relations of their languages and comparison of other circumstances. Among the monuments are found evidences of a carefully recorded chronology; but, like themselves, it is fragmentary. A precision of dates similar to that of the Hebrew was observed by the Egyptians, subsequent to the eleventh dynasty of their kings; but so many are lost that it has become the most difficult problem of Egyptology to harmonize or unite those that remain. Earlier than the eleventh dynasty there are none.

The narrative of Genesis, according to the Hebrew chronology, comes down to about twenty-four hundred years from the creation of man. The oldest Egyptian monuments, until the end of the twelfth dynasty, and some of the Babylonian, belong to the same period. And although the collections of the Veda and of the Avesta were not made so early as even the end of it, the hymns, which constitute their most sacred portions, cannot be of much less antiquity. The religion of the Avesta was ancient in the days of Darius Hystaspis. It had even then passed through the period of its

primitive purity; had been the religion of a powerful and wide-spread people; had suffered some degree of subsequent depression, under the usurpation of Gomates the Mede, from which Darius says that he rescued it, and assigned it to the honor and singleness of authority, which it had in the days of his ancient forefathers. Darius was an admirer of antiquity and thought much of his own long line of regal descent, and informs us that he was the ninth in a succession of kings. And if the religion which he restored to its purity, was that of his countrymen, in the days of his earliest royal ancestor, which he leaves us no room to doubt was his conviction, the antiquity of its introduction among them must be carried much further back. In order to become the sole national religion, embodying all the cherished traditions of the people, it must have been observed among them for many generations. And, whether originally written or not, the Gathas of the Avesta are certainly coëval with the establishment of the worship of Ahura-Mazda as the national religion. For they are its essential parts, as much so as the Gospels to Christianity.

All these remains are greatly anterior to the earliest production in the Greek language; anterior to the earliest information that can be obtained of mythology in its classical form; anterior to the subject of the Homeric poems, in which we first meet with that mythology, lying away back in the antiquity to which Aeschylus refers the immediate antecedents of his Prometheus. No literature of Europe comes to us from an equal depth of ages.

CHAPTER V.

PRIMITIVE THEISM.

In the testimony thus furnished, whatever else may appear touching the early ages of mankind, the principal subject is religion. And in taking account of it, we shall first consider the views which it presents of God, and then, successively, of man in his relations to God, of sin and of reward and punishment, of a future life, of the means of obtaining the divine favor, and of their ecclesiastical systems, if they had any.

What, then, did the composers of those ancient books and monuments think of God? Let us not prejudge, but hear their own words. The testimony of Genesis is given with great plainness, directness, and simplicity. God is represented as a person, man is made in his likeness, He converses with Adam, and reveals himself to Noah with affections like those of a man. There is no assertion that God is one, nor denial that there are more. The earlier part of the book has the appearance of having substantially come down from a time, when there was no agitation of that question, when one God was all that ever had been thought of This substantial testimony is not to be counterbalanced by the classic Hebrew names and idioms which the

book contains: for it has plainly undergone a transfer to a dialect later than itself. The common Hebrew names of God, JEHOVAH and ELOHIM, are used in the narrative of Genesis; but it is EL which, with one single exception,* appears in the proper names, given as containing that of God.† EL was clearly the ordinary name of God among the men who formed those compound names. Among the immediate descendants of Noah, we hear of no other than the God whom their father worshipped. And that God was not a generalization, not the fruit of induction, not an ultimate step of progressive refinement, but a holy and almighty person, simply and directly revealed, as a spirit, and yet by bodily attributes. In Genesis we read not a word about God, the soul and the world being one, not a word implying that they were confounded together in the mind of the writer, or of any of the persons mentioned, not a word to indicate the previous work of a philosophy. It recognizes God as everywhere present; but distinguishes between him and the world, and between him and the human soul in the most natural, simple and yet emphatic manner. The unity of his nature and his personality, distinct from all the work of his hand, are the primary elements of the idea of God there presented.

It is the testimony of Moses, who gives it on the authority of Him whom he preached to the Israelites in Egypt, that the name, whereby God was known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was EL SHADDAI, a שדי אל

* Genesis xxii. 14.

† Genesis xvi. 11, 13; xxviii. 19; xxxii. 28, 30; xxxiii. 20.

in the singular number, followed by one in the plural. But it appears that EL was used by the patriarchs as complete in itself. For the proper names in which they combined the name of God, contain only that word. Thus Bethu*el*, Ishma*el*, Beth*el*, Isra*el*, are all names belonging to the families of the Hebrew patriarchs. EL was to their understanding complete in itself, as the name of God.

From a fragment of Sanchoniathon we learn that the Phenicians, who were Canaanites, in times very ancient to that writer, called the god, whom they deemed the son of Heaven, by a name, which in the Greek translation is made ILUS; and that his allies, or auxiliaries, were called ELOEIM.* Recurring to the Semitic form, IL (or ILU), as it must have been written by Sanchoniathon, is identical with the Hebrew, and Eloeim is obviously the Hebrew Elohim.

One of the names of the supreme god of Babylon was IL, the dignity of which is evinced by its being sometimes replaced by the Egyptian RA.† Thus it appears that EL was the name by which God was known in the most ancient time, among the inhabitants of Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Phenicia, and Canaan. Whatever the origin of the plural ELOHIM and the use made of it among the Hebrews, it is clear that the Canaanites, who spoke the same language, used it, in the service of polytheism, to designate a plurality of gods; and that its use among them for that idea was subsequent to the use of the singular. In Phenician

* Euseb. Præp. Evan. lib. i. c. 10.

† Rawlinson's "Herodotus, vol. i. p. 480.

mythology the *Eloeim* were the allies of IL. Among the Hebrews, of the time of Moses, the word Elohim was used naturally as a plural to designate the many gods of the heathen, and also as a singular for the name of the only living and true God, in his general relations to all mankind, corresponding to the old patriarchal name EL.

In adducing this process in the growth of language, it is important to remind the reader that the Hebrew of old time was not confined to the Patriarchs in the descent of Terah, and to their families, but was spoken over all Syria and Mesopotamia, and as far east as Elam and to the western borders of Persia. In other words, the descendants of Terah spoke the common language of the region where they dwelt, and to which the land of their promise belonged. They were, therefore, to some degree constrained to take it as they found it, as it was formed by the greater public; and, until they became a nation themselves, could have but little influence in deciding its idioms.

How soon the plural ELOHIM came into use, or why, is nowhere mentioned in Scripture. The earliest express announcement of the name by which God was known in ancient time, is that contained in the first verse of the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, where it is said that he appeared unto Abraham, by his name EL SHADDAI. In this, as in some other places, a plural epithet is attached to the singular noun. Other remains of such a custom, in the time of the Patriarchs, are to be found in ancient Scripture, as in that place where Jacob is said to have designated EL as the ELOHIM of

Israel, and in another, where God is said to have declared himself to Jacob as the EL, who was the Elohim of his fathers. From such usage it might appear as if Elohim were the older name and El one of a later revelation, but for the testimony borne by much more ancient names, in which El appears as a component part. Thus Mehuja*el*, Methusa*el*, and Mahalalee*l* occur in the lists of antediluvian Patriarchs. It is the only name of God for which there exists in Scripture such evidence of antiquity. When the plural Elohim came into use with the growth and prevalence of polytheistic ideas, El was still retained by the Hebrew patriarchs and prefixed to Elohim to distinguish the Elohim of the Hebrews from the Elohim of the heathen. At a later time also, the same name was used, as in Joshua, xxii. chapter and 22d verse, to distinguish the true God from the false gods which had subsequently been multiplied. Jehovah, the peculiar Hebrew name of God, is designated the El of Elohim. It occurs several times in the Psalms with a certain archaic effect, favorable to poetic expression.

All this is entirely in accordance with the otherwise clear teaching of the book of Genesis, that God revealed Himself as one to the primitive fathers of mankind, to Noah, and subsequently to the Hebrews; but that the nations, in course of time, multiplied to themselves objects of worship, and learned to think and speak of God as many, or, at least, as manifold. The first steps towards polytheism were taken without denying the unity of God. Laban worshipped the same God with Jacob, yet had idols in his house, which he called his

gods.* In the introduction of the name Jehovah a return was made to the use of the singular number by a term of peculiar significance.

Such is the testimony of Genesis and other ancient books of Hebrew Scripture. The sum of it is that the oldest religion of the world reposed upon one spiritual God: when idols were introduced it was only as helps in His worship: when the same God again reveals Himself to the Hebrew patriarchs it is under the same singular name revived and such a use of the plural as to limit it to the signification of only one Almighty Being; and when again God revealed Himself to Moses, it was under a name which was not only in the singular number, but admitted of no plural. The earlier narrative of Genesis evinces no knowledge of anything but one God. The El Elohim of the patriarchs is in opposition to polytheism. And the Jehovah of the later dispensation declares the self-existent spirituality of one God, in opposition to the manifold gods made by men's hands, ever changing with the conceptions of their worshippers.

Among the Canaanites there appears no trace of polytheism in the time of Abraham. Those mentioned in the life of that patriarch seem to have worshipped the same God, but most likely in a defective or erroneous way. Some of them were shockingly wicked, as the inhabitants of the plain of Jordan, but not so much by perverting religion as by leaving it entirely out of view. Others were really religious men, who reverenced the

* Genesis xxxi. 30, 49–54.

living God, according to the dispensation, which had been in force since the days of Noah. Abimelech of Gerar honored the true God and His command, asked of Abraham, and gave in return the solemn obligations of an oath in his name, and received and obeyed a revelation from God, in respect to his own conduct, and which we learn was regarded with solemn reverence also by the heads of his people. And it is expressly said of the king of Salem, that he was priest of the Most High God.

It is clear, however, that the transition from monotheism to polytheism had, in some quarters, already commenced, and within a narrow area made considerable progress. Joshua, when addressing the Israelites, after their settlement in Canaan, enjoined them to put away the idols, which their fathers had worshipped beyond the flood; that is beyond the Euphrates, and in Egypt; and informed them definitely that among their fathers, on the other side of the flood, it was Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, to whom he had special reference. But Laban, the grandson of Nahor, and great-grandson of Terah, who remained a resident in the land of his father, and apparently occupying the estate of his ancestors, when making his covenant with Jacob, mentioned the God of Abraham as being also the God of Nahor, and the God of their father. Consequently the gods to whom Joshua refers as worshipped by Terah, did not occupy such a place in his worship as to render it incorrect to say that the God of Abraham was also his God, without alluding to other gods. Laban himself had minor gods, and yet wor-

shipped the God of Jacob, received from Him revelations of His will, and gave and accepted the most solemn obligations in his name, without allusion to the existence of any other.

It is clear that, in these cases, the gods mentioned could be only images used as helps in the worship of the one living and true God. That most god-fearing of all generations of Hebrews, educated in the wilderness, and led by Joshua in the conquest of Canaan, still contained families which had among them the images, or such images as those of Terah and Laban, and seem to have considered the use of them as not exclusive of, nor inconsistent with the service of Jehovah, until its nature was exposed before them by the expostulation of Joshua.

That such a use of images was an initiatory step of error in the service of one God, without being viewed or intended as a departure from it appears from several facts in Scripture history. It was a stage of transition from monotheism to polytheism, in which the former is the recognized doctrine, and the latter is only a method of symbols subordinate thereto.

Egypt was at that date only further advanced in the same career But the next two or three hundred years wrought a great change upon the religious views and practices of all those nations. At the end of that interval, we find idol-worship fully and firmly established among them all, and the true God, as far as history makes known to us, entirely lost to view. The Pharaoh of the Exode insultantly asks, in the true spirit of a polytheist, who could conceive of the God of Israel

as only one among many, a new god and a stranger to his country, and whom, for that reason, he was under no obligation to respect, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey him?" And the nations of Canaan, the monotheists of the days of Abraham, had become base polytheistic idolators in those of Moses and Joshua. Israelites themselves, when they came out of Egypt, had learned to think of God in the plural. When Aaron made for them the golden calf, they spoke of it as representing the plural: "These be thy gods, O Israel." And this they do without rejecting the God of their fathers. They are themselves in the transition-state from monotheism to polytheism, through which, by that time, most of their neighbors had passed. At that juncture, God reveals Himself anew, to re-establish his worship among them, and by a new name, emphatically in the singular number. Thence forward, the Hebrews used both the singular word Jehovah and the plural Elohim, and sometimes, though more rarely and poetically, the old singular El. Other terms were occasionally used, but all implying the singleness of the Deity; and the truth contained in the name Jehovah continued to be the centre of their orthodoxy on the subject.

Other nations, according to the same testimony, were left to the natural use of the primitive instruction, and preserved or corrupted it in various degrees. But the highest attainments in civilization did not constitute the circumstances of the greatest purity. The Egyptians, who were certainly at the head of all social, civil, and scientific culture, were also the furthest advanced in polytheism and idolatry.

Among the early inhabitants of Iran, when their style of living was similar to that of the Hebrew patriarchs, those of whom we have most information were the residents of its north-eastern portion. There, and in the adjoining regions, at a date long antecedent to the earliest history, the fathers of the Persian and Hindu resided side by side, speaking one language and observing the duties of the same religion:—facts, which, although recorded by the pen of no historian, are rendered indubitable by testimony, embalmed in the remains of the dialects then spoken as well as by much that still lives in the lives of their descendants, and in ancient religious writings which survive to this day. On the half desert uplands of that oldest historic home of the Indo-European race, and after many a colony had gone off to the west and to the north, and through the glens of the mountains into central Asia, in search of more productive lands. for the sake of material profit, parting company with much of the culture which belonged to the place of their birth, those, who afterward became the Indian and the Persian, remained until some of the original lines of distinction had been drawn between them. Of the same common descent, near of kin, and speaking languages originally one, and still in the products of their literature exhibiting their near affinity, and calling themselves by the same name, they agreed in worshipping with similar simple rites the unseen ruler of heaven and earth. The time came when their colonies also moved away from the salubrious climate, but scantily productive land of their nativity. Instead of following their migratory kinsmen, who had gone off

to the north and west, they turned their steps to the east and south, and lingered for ages on the declivities of the mountains and in the north of the Punjab, where they were not entirely cut off from all communication with their former country. Their religious observances were modified by the character of their new place of abode, and in process of time became more ceremonial and complicated, but long retained the features which determined their former identity with the nation they had left behind.

The Aryas, who continued to abide by the homestead, or spread themselves abroad, only to occupy more widely the great table land on which they dwelt, as they of all their branch of mankind were the most conservative in other respects, so in this that they retained the faith of their fathers with the least amount of adulteration. And yet that was not done without a conflict, a reaction against increasing degeneracy, and loss of some important elements of earlier religion. While the Aryas in India developed the ceremonial of their religion, those of Iran were checked in the same career by the revolution effected among them through the labors of Zarathustra. In opposition to the naturalistic idolatry into which the religion of both India and Iran were sinking, that eminent teacher inculcated the doctrine of one spiritual God, creator and ruler of heaven and earth, and of his worship as the spiritual homage of a pure heart. His teaching seems to have been largely if not universally accepted by his people. The wicked men, of whom he sings in the Gathas, may have been his religious opponents, or merely bad men

in a moral sense. Persons who dissented from his views most likely remained attached to, or went over to the Indian persuasion. No other sect of equal antiquity has left evidence of itself. The Zarathustrian reformation was a reaction against ritualism and polytheism; one of the earliest of those movements which have increased in power and popularity with the increase of intelligence. The religion of Zarathustra became the religion of Persia, which was most conspicuously distinguished by the worship of one God without the blood and ceremonial of sacrifice. True, even in the oldest parts of the Avesta other divine beings are mentioned besides Ahura-Mazda; but they are all of inferior nature as compared with him. They are his creatures, or his attributes personified. The highest of them are the Amesha-Spentas, six divine beings most intimately connected with Ahura-Mazda, of whom he is sometimes represented as the chief, or lord, and sometimes as the father. Each of them separately he presented to Zarathustra as his creature. From their names they appear to be merely personified attributes of God. Vohu-mano signifies good disposition; Asha-vahista, the highest holiness; Khshatha-vairya, unlimited lordship; Spenta-armaiti, holy wisdom; Haurvat, plenty, and Ameretat, abundance. Together with all other mythological beings of the Avesta, they stand to Ahura-Mazda as ministering spirits. He alone is God, the lord of the Amesha-spentas, from whom they also proceed, or by whom they are created. Spenta-armaiti is his beautiful daughter, and from the word of his mouth the world first sprang into being. Ahura-Mazda

alone is praised as the creator, the resplendent, the majestic, the greatest, the best and the fairest, the strongest, the wisest, a spirit, possessed of the most perfect form and the highest holiness, who created us and preserves us in being.* No other is honored with such attributes. Wherever mentioned it is as God over all.

The mention of inferior mythological beings, whether abstractions personified, or objects of nature, is much less in the Gathas than in the later parts of the Avesta, which are legal and liturgical, and the name of Ahura-Mazda more frequent. The Gathas are all addressed directly to him: nor is there any division of the sovereignty, which they attribute, between equally balanced powers of good and evil. Anra-mainyas is the twin of Mazda, as being, like him, originally from heaven, but is no match for him in power. The evil one acts without foresight, while Ahura-Mazda always foresees all the operation of all designs. The Amesha-Spentas and Mithra, the lord of light, are only archangels in the train of Ahura-Mazda. He is God, not as first, but as sole, as different from them in his being and perfections. As the first chapter of the Yasna begins with his attributes, so its last extols him as the greatest of all, the lord and master and the glorious in majesty. In the Gathas, the names AHURA and MAZDA, or combined Ahura-Mazda, occur as frequently as Lord and God, and Lord God, in the Hebrew Psalms. Mazda is the chief theme of all the Gathas, the object of their highest praises. To him "Belongs an imperishable kingdom.

* Yasna, i. 1-4. 44. 5

He knows all the words he has made. He knows the impure through his wisdom. He is the creator: he reveals the doctrines of the Gathas to Zarathustra, choosing him as holy. It is best for those who give their hearts to Mazda: he is the heavenly; he created the world: he created fulness and immortality unto the perfection of the pure. He, the head of his kingdom, the fulness of rightmindedness for him who through heavenly deeds is his friend. When his rule shall be perfect, then will each know justice. He rules over what man knows and over what is hidden. He dwells in purity: he is the pure, the lord of purity: and is thus invoked. Manifest thyself, O holiest, heavenly Mazda, thou who createdst, O holy one, the good things of Vohu-mano." *

Persian writings state that their religion was, at several distant periods, corrupted, or repressed, and revived by succeeding reformation. Before the production of the Gathas it had suffered from the disastrous effects of error. In one of those hymns, it is revealed to Zarathustra, that "Evil doctrine shall not, for the second time, destroy the world." † The Avesta is itself the fruit of a reformation upon some more ancient religion. Zarathustra, its prophet, is the censor of previous errors, and the receiver of revelations of truth. The reverence paid to fire, as the holy element, coincides with the Vedic worship of fire; but in the Veda alone is the reason given. It is that fire on the altar burning the sacrifice sent it up to heaven in smoke,

* Yasna, 37, 42-3. † Yasna, 44. 1.

making it thereby acceptable to the gods. Avestan religion, in its tenderness for life, rejects sacrifice, and yet venerates fire, not as a god, but as the holiest of the elements. In the Gathas it is said that worshippers approach Ahura-Mazda through the ministry of fire and that fire is the son of Ahura-Mazda. The belief is descended from an older religion, which observed sacrifice: and yet it is not likely that the older religion was the Vedic, at the stage in which it appears in the extant hymns. For the name of God used in the Avesta, does not correspond to any divine name in the Veda; nor does the spiritual hierarchy of one to that of the other. The names in both are used as already well known. Zarathustra, certainly, used the name of God most venerated by his people—that name, which he believed would most truly contain to their mind the attributes of the Supreme Being. At the same time, the Avesta embraces most of the fundamental elements of the Vedic religion, but not in its peculiar Vedic form. They are both derived from an older original. The latter is the ritualistic and mythological development of the common faith, and the former a reformation. professing to go back to the primal sources of revelation. The Persic and Indic branches must have separated at an earlier stage than that which appears in the Veda. In the thirty-second chapter of the Yasna, also in the thirty-third and thirty-fourth, there are passages, some of them very obscure, which seem to be censure of preceding errors of doctrine and worship.

"The false prayers, through their teaching, slay the soul of life." 32. 8.

"The men who, by their teaching, hinder from good deeds, to these has Mazda announced evil." 32. 12.

The obscurity of some passages in these chapters is probably due to allusions to that ancient controversy with still more ancient errors, now utterly forgotten. The Gathas recommend their religion as rejection of error and return to earlier purity. Older forms of worship are alluded to, some as approved, and some as condemned. Yet the worship of the one God, Ahura-Mazda, is established in those songs upon a new basis, purer, loftier, and separate from error,—a revelation even more than a reform.

It was not without effort that the Persians maintained that monotheistic creed, in the midst of a world, at that time, so generally disposed to polytheism. Thus Zarathustra himself:

"As the Holy One thought I thee, O Mazda,
When it came to me through Vohu-mano,
When it was first taught me through your prayers,
That the spreading abroad of the law through
Me among men was something difficult,
That will I do, which was said to me as the best." *

In the inscriptions of Darius Hystaspes, about 500 B. C., we find it, after having passed through some obscuration, again in its simplest form. No prince in his public records, ever gave more emphatic expression to a sense of dependence upon Almighty aid, of indebtedness to the grace of Him who rules the heavens and the earth than that Augustus of the Oriental world.

* Yasna, 42. 11.

In the inscription which he has left carved upon the rocks of Behistun, that confession of his faith is repeated in almost every section. He does not leave us to question the monotheism of his theology, nor to conceive of the God, whom he worshipped as a creature. "A great God," he says, "is Auramazda who made the earth, who made the heaven, who created men, and provided blessedness for them, who made Darius king, the sole king over many." Whatever mention is made of other gods is made of them as inferior and as worshipped by foreign or subject nations. Auramazda is declared to be the greatest over all gods. He alone is the sovereign as well as the creator of heaven and earth and of men. In all the success which the great king records of his reign the praise is never taken to himself but invariably ascribed to God. When his enemies rose against him, Auramazda became his refuge, and when he won the victory it was by the grace of Auramazda. "Through the might of Auramazda am I king;" "Through the grace of Auramazda do I rule this kingdom." * These and similar expressions recur frequently upon his inscriptions: and his final lesson, yet speaking from the rocks on which he caused it to be written, is an exhortation to reverence the commands of Auramazda.

There can be no doubt that the religion of Darius and his Persian people was the worship of the Creator, and, in some degree, according to the creed of the old patriarchal times, before the call of Abraham. In this case, we behold that ancient belief brought down to the verge of Hellenic maturity. And that it was not

* Inscription of Behistun.

peculiar to Darius he informs us himself in setting it forth as the ancient religion of his people. It also appears in the sympathy of Cyrus with the monotheistic Jews, and the ridicule, which Cambyses and his Persians poured upon the idols of Egypt. The language of Cyrus in issuing his decree for allowing all Israelites to return to their own land, is entirely analogous to that of Darius, as respects dependence upon God. He does not say of himself that he had conquered his great empire, but "The God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth." *

In native hands the tendency to corruption manifested itself in the sacred use of fire as in some way symbolical of God; but I do not find in their ancient writings that fire is ever represented as God. Neither is the sun ever confounded with deity. That great orb is regarded as the creature, or the offspring of God, the son of Ahura-Mazda. Belief of the opposite which prevails in Europe, regarding the Parsees, is derived from misunderstanding of their observances in more recent times.

In the case of the Aryas who went into India, this symbolizing spirit had, at the date of the earliest hymns of the Veda, gone to a greater length, but still not so far as materially to obscure the doctrine of one only God. Although confused in their ideas by the incipient polytheism of their time, Rishis or prophets of the Veda generally address the god of their adoration as sole or sovereign. Vedic theism is already polytheistic, but of that particular type in which the

* Ezra, i. 2.

divine personages appear as only embodiments of separate divine attributes, or manifestations of deity in nature. Without the pure and sublime doctrine of the Gathas, of the inscriptions of Darius or of the unfaltering declarations of Genesis, the ancient Vedic hymns sufficiently demonstrate the earlier existence of a habit of thinking of God as one. And the light in which to judge them truly is that of the progress of Hindu religion in succeeding time. Every subsequent step was a growth in polytheism, until the creed of India became a wilderness of idolatry as tangled and boundless as that of Egypt. It is in the line of that progress that we find the oldest parts the nearest to monotheism. I quote from a hymn to Varuna translated by Prof. Max Müller:

9. "He who knows the track of the wind, of the wide, the bright and mighty, and knows those who reside on high,

10. He, the upholder of order, Varuna sits down among his people; he the wise sits there to govern.

11. From thence perceiving all wonderous things he sees what has been, and what will be done."

15. "He who gives to men glory, and not half glory, who, gives it even to our own bodies,

16. Yearning for him, the far-seeing, my thoughts move onwards, as kine move to their pastures."

19. "O hear this my calling, Varuna, be gracious now, longing for help, I have called upon thee.

20. Thou, O wise God, art lord of all, of heaven and earth; listen on thy way."

From another hymn to Varuna, we perceive that under that name they adored the Creator:

"Wise and mighty are the works of him who stemmed asunder the wide firmaments. He lifted on high the bright and glorious heaven, he stretched out apart the starry sky and the earth."

Again he is addressed as the god who has mercy for sinners:

1. "Let me not yet, O Varuna, enter into the house of clay: have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
2. If I go along trembling, like a cloud driven by the wind; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
3. Through want of strength, thou strong and bright God, have I gone to the wrong shore: have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
4. Thirst came upon the worshipper, though he stood in the midst of the waters; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
5. Whenever we men, O Varuna, commit an offence before the heavenly host; whenever we break thy law through thoughtlessness: have mercy, Almighty, have mercy."*

Were all Vedic hymns such as these, we should pronounce the religion, in whose service they were produced, a pure monotheism; but there are many having equal evidence of antiquity, addressed to other divine beings and to each as sovereign. But it is to be remarked in the translations of Prof. Müller that there is a difference between the sovereignty ascribed to Varuna and that of any other god. When adoration is paid to Indra or to Agni, the god is represented as the possessor of certain attributes of sovereignty. He is addressed as almighty, but that almighty power is invoked in reference only to his own special jurisdiction. Va-

* Müller, "History of Sanskrit Literature," p. 540.

runa is the absolute sovereign, the lord of all, of heaven and of earth. In the following extracts from a hymn to Indra the feature now mentioned will be observed.

3. "Desirous of riches, I call him, who holds the thunderbolt with his arm, and who is a good giver, like as a son calls his father.

4. These libations of soma, mixed with milk, have been prepared for Indra. Thou armed with the thunderbolt, come with the steeds to drink of them for thy delight: come to the house.

5. May he hear us; for he has ears to hear. He is asked for riches. Will he despise our prayers? He could soon give hundreds and thousands: no one could check him, if he wishes to give."

8. "Offer soma to the drinker of soma, to Indra the lord of the thunderbolt; roast roasts: make him to protect us. Indra, the giver, is a blessing to him who gives oblations."

13. "Make for the sacred gods a hymn that is not small, that is well set and beautiful. Many snares pass by him who abides with Indra, through the sacrifice.

14. What mortal dares to attack him who is rich in thee? Through faith in thee, O mighty, the strong acquires spoil in the day of battle."

22. "We call for thee, O hero, like cows that have not been milked. We praise thee as ruler of all that moves, O Indra, as ruler of all that is unmovable.

23. There is no one like thee in heaven or earth: he is not born, and will not be born. O mighty Indra, we call upon thee, as we go fighting for cows and horses."

26. "Indra, give wisdom to us, as a father to his sons. Teach us in this path. Let us living see the sun.

27. Let unknown wretches, evil disposed and unhallowed tread me down. Through thy help, O hero, let us step over the rushing eternal waters."

"In this hymn," remarks Prof. Müller, "Indra is clearly conceived of as the supreme god; and we can hardly understand how a people who had formed so exalted a notion of the deity, and embodied it in the person of Indra, could at the same sacrifice invoke other gods with equal praise. When Agni, the lord of fire, is addressed by the poet, he is spoken of as the first god, not inferior even to Indra. While Agni is invoked, Indra is forgotten. There is no competition between the two, nor any rivalry between them and other gods. This is a most important feature in the religion of the Veda and has never been taken into consideration by those who have written on the history of ancient polytheism."* It is the language of a people who, inheriting the worship of one god, are passing over to the practice of representing him in many persons, and of paying their adoration to those persons severally. They have not yet learned to discriminate between different kinds and degrees of worship, nor to distribute the attributes of deity consistently. Whatever divine person is adored as god is for the time being, conceived of as sole Almighty. They are in a transition state, and the practice of addressing different gods has not yet transformed their religious thinking into entire consistency with itself. Under different names the poets of the Veda actually sang the praises of one deity in the exercise of different attributes; or, in other words, recognizing the existence of various gods, they address each of them in different hymns, as if he were the only one.

To a great extent their deification of certain objects

* "History of Sanskrit Literature," pp. 543-546.

of nature is still only the work of figurative language—a bold personification, such as a poet might indulge in without blame were it not united to the worship of God, under that particular form—one of the steps from the wonder created by observation of nature to idolatry of her objects. The following hymn to Agni (Ignis), fire, will illustrate this remark:

"Neighing like a horse that is greedy for food, when it steps out from the strong prison; then the wind blows after his blast: thy path, O Agni, is dark at once.

O Agni, thou from whom, as a new-born male, undying flames proceed, the brilliant smoke goes toward the sky; for as messenger thou art sent from the gods.

Thou, whose power spreads over the earth in a moment, when thou hast grasped food with thy jaws—like a dashing army thy blast moves forth, with thy lambent flame thou seemest to tear up the grass.

Him alone, the ever-youthful Agni, men groom like a horse in the evening and at dawn: they bed him as a stranger in his couch; the light of Agni, the worshipped male is lighted.

Thy appearance is fair to behold, thou bright-faced Agni, when like gold thou shinest at hand: thy brightness comes like the lightning of heaven, thou showest splendor, like the bright sun."

The process observable here, as in other Vedic hymns, is that of first wonder at the mysterious operation of Nature, then the ascription to it of the power of life; it is then personified as human and intelligent, and lastly conceived of as divine—as the very presence and person of God. But the way whereby it arose in the minds of early men was probably that of referring all to the immediate action of God, and then representing

the divine attributes in language proper to the life of man. The wonderful things of nature are conceived of as the outgoing of different powers of God, and God is praised in terms descriptive of each of them.

Among the Rishis, or Vedic poets, there is much difference in this matter. Somahuti, for example, presents Agni more as a person, and Dirghatamas as a mere personification. This difference between these two Rishis appears to be general, upon a comparison of their hymns in mass. Somahuti is a further advanced polytheist. He can conceive of the god he praises, as being literally crammed full of soma and sacrifice. Dirghatamas is saved from that degradation by a higher poetic nature, and by conceiving the impersonation as setting forth only an outgoing of divine power. Others, as Viswamitra may be classed with Somahuti, while the illustrious Rishis, Paruchhepa, Kakshivat, Agastya, and Gritsamada, like Dirghatamas, treat the gods as figurative, as impersonations of the attributes of God expressing themselves in nature.

Comparatively the number of such objects of worship, in the most ancient Veda is small. Subsequent development enlarged the number, until, in course of time, it went beyond all bounds, while degrading the practical worship to the grossest idolatry, and separating and abstracting the idea of absolute deity to the state of a great eternal negation of all conditions. On the contrary, the idea of God presented in the most ancient Vedic hymns is, as in Genesis, that of a being whom man can love, who stoops to treat men as his children, walking in the garden, in the cool of the day, directing

Noah to prepare an ark for the safety of his family, and talking with Abraham as a man talks with his friend. So "Varuna, the upholder of order, sits down among his people; he, the wise, sits there to govern." He listens to their wants, and from his love to them is influenced by their prayers, and pleased with their songs. And they address him as one who can be so moved. "However, we break thy laws from day to day, men as we are, O god Varuna, do not deliver us unto death, nor to the blow of the furious; nor to the anger of the spiteful. To propitiate thee, O Varuna, we bind thy mind with songs, as a charioteer a weary steed."

These utterances of ancient Aryan devotion still retain features of the style of thinking of God, which belonged to the time made familiar to us in the history of the Hebrew patriarchs, when God manifested his presence and revealed his will to men by theophany. He has not yet become a mere idol, nor a far-off impassive abstraction. And although a plurality of gods is admitted, the idea of the godhead being one still holds its place. True, it is almost inevitable that, even in the grossest polytheism, some god should be esteemed above the rest; but it is one thing to conceive of a chief among gods, or over them, and a very different thing, even from the midst of incipient polytheism, to look up to one God as sole ruler of heaven and earth with power undivided, and all other beings as only ministers of his will, as everywhere present and yet personal, and as working in all, without losing himself in any.

This view of the case is very fully sustained by a hymn translated by Prof. Müller from the tenth book of the Rig Veda, in which, as he remarks, "the idea of one God is expressed with such power and decision, that it will make us hesitate before we deny to the Aryan nations an instinctive monotheism."

"In the beginning there arose the source of golden light. He was the only born lord of all that is. He stablished the earth, and this sky; who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

He who gives life, He who gives strength; whose blessing all the bright gods desire; whose shadow is immortality; whose shadow is death;—Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

He who through his power is the only king of the breathing and awakening world;—He who governs all, man and beast;—Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

He whose power these snowy mountains, whose power the sea proclaims, with the distant river—He whose these regions are as it were his two arms;—Who is the god to whom we offer our sacrifice?

He through whom the sky is bright and the earth firm—He through whom the heaven was stablished—nay, the highest heaven—He who measured out the light in the air;—Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

He to whom heaven and earth, standing firm by His will, look up, trembling inwardly—He over whom the rising sun shines forth;—Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

Wherever the mighty water-clouds went, where they placed the seed and lit the fire, thence arose He who is the only life of the bright gods;—Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

He who by His might looked even over the water-clouds, the clouds which gave strength and lit the sacrifice, He *who is*

God above all gods;—Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

May He not destroy us—He the creator of the earth; or He, the righteous, who created the heaven; He who also created the bright and mighty waters;—Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice? *

At the date of the oldest Vedic hymns, the progress in nature-worship, among the Aryans of India, had reached the stage of apotheosis of the sun, of fire, of the clear sky, of the dawn, and of some other phenomena, and yet not the length of forgetting that these are only agencies accomplishing the will of one spiritual god, energizing in nature and manifesting himself by its changes. In each of them is adored some attribute of the Almighty. A monotheistic faith still speaks in the language of its polytheism.

Nor are we left to inferences, however direct and plain; the doctrine is expressly stated in a verse quoted by Prof. Müller from the first book of the Rig Veda.†

"They call (him) Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni; then he is the well-winged heavenly Garutmat; that which is One the wise call it many ways; they call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan."

"There is," remarks Prof. Müller in another connection, "a monotheism that precedes the polytheism of the Veda, and even in the invocations of their innumerable gods the remembrance of a god, one and infinite, breaks through the mist of an idolatrous phraseology, like the blue sky that is hidden by passing clouds." ‡

* "History of Sanskrit Literature," pp. 568, 569.

† Ibid. p. 567.

‡ Ibid. p. 559

A similar stage of progress is exhibited upon the monuments of ancient Assyria. Although many mythological objects are there depicted, yet worship is paid to only one in heaven and one on the earth, which both clearly refer to the same god. The winged wheel in the air and a conventional figure, seeming to represent vegetation upon earth, sometimes appear together and sometimes singly, but always as objects of worship. Persons are represented in the attitude of prayer and supplication before them. They kneel and spread their hands towards the latter. The Almighty God seems to be conceived of as residing in heaven, but the worship is addressed to the emblem upon earth, which I take to be a conventional sign for a sacred arbor or grove, such as the ancient Syrians were wont to worship in.

Sometimes the wheel is empty and sometimes it contains the figure of an eagle, sometimes the bust of a man. Sometimes, in military scenes, it appears in the heaven above a king going forth in his chariot to battle, and the human figure, which it contains, is represented as discharging his arrows against the enemies of the king, or extending his hands in blessing and with a diadem for the king returning in victory. The sign is clearly the same as that of the sun-god of the Egyptians, and seems to represent God as a present and providential overruling power, as reigning in heaven and controling the life and fortune of man and of nature upon earth.

Accordingly, it was easy for the Ninevites, of the ninth century before Christ, in the habit of recognizing

one supreme God, lord of heaven and earth, to understand the message of Jonah, addressed to them in the name of the true God of heaven and earth. Although accustomed to the use of symbols, which the faithful Hebrew disapproved of, and speaking of god in the plural number their ideas of the supreme deity were such as to make the language of the prophet perfectly intelligible to them.* They recognized one supreme God and Jonah's message, declared to them in the name of the only living and true God, they received with the reverence due to that authority, and humbled themselves in repentance.

Other emblematical beings represented upon the Ninevite monuments never appear as objects of worship. They are only ministers or angels of blessing or of vengeance, or they are simply emblematic of certain attributes. Most of them are found occupying places where some mythological meaning is connected with ornament, on the walls or at the entrance of a palace or temple.

It was in the nature of idolatrous progress that such symbolical figures should in later time partake of divine honors. Nisroch, who never appears upon the exhumed monuments as receiving adoration, or as the power to whom prayer and supplication are addressed, became the favorite god of Sennacherib. As far as the sculptures testify, the composite figures, winged lions, winged bulls with human heads, winged men, and so on, occupy such places as the cherubim upon Solomon's temple. and the Centaurs and Lapithae upon the Parthenon. They

* Jonah iii. 5, 8, 9.

were, in fact, the cherubim of Assyria. They suggested the sacred symbols of Ezekiel. In them the spirit of inspiration made use of such imagery as was not strange to the prophet's eye to impress the truth upon his mind.

In those figures the principal elements are the parts, of a man, of an ox, of a lion, and of an eagle. All of which are employed by Ezekiel in representing the attendants of Jehovah, while the divine intelligence is also represented by the wheel exalted far into the heavens. Of the symbolical elements the commonest are the wings. They seem to be the general sign for spiritual being, or of mythological meaning. In connection with the human figure, with that of the bull, of the horse, of the lion, and with the sacred circle, as well as with the eagle, they are nearly always of the same form.

The bull was, in the ancient oriental world generally, chosen as sacred to the sun, or to the deity whose special glory was the sun. Thus the Indra of the Hindus, their god of solar light and force, and among the Persians, Mithra, the highest angel of light in the train of Auramazda, were each symbolized by the bull. In Egypt the bull was sacred to Phtah the creator, the god of fire and light, as worshipped in Memphis, as well as to Ra, the sun-god in the city of On, and throughout the country generally. And in accordance with the sun-worship of Assyria, the figure of the bull appears very frequently upon her monuments, perhaps signifying the force of animal life, which is so much dependent on the sun.

The lion in all ages has been the emblem of valor and of dominion, and in the heathen east, of the ruling power of deity. In like manner, the soaring flight and terrible swoop of the eágle upon his prey have led warlike nations, both ancient and modern, to select that bird as the sign of their own national character. It appeared upon the standards of Assyria as well as of Rome. But in Assyria it signified also the kindred attribute of deity. The eagle-headed human figure is one of the commonest of sacred types upon the monuments. It often appears contending with mythic animals, and always as the victor; most probably representing the divine power and its superiority over the brutal. But even this figure, in the old religion of the monuments, could not have signified anything more than a spiritual agent of God. For it never appears receiving worship or adoration; but, on the contrary, sometimes paying service to the king.

The horse, used almost solely for purposes of state parade, of hunting and of war, and naturally expressive of fleetness in motion and exultant grace and strength, was also associated with the worship of the divine Being in whom those attributes were held to reside, and who was also the god whose glory appeared in the sun the Baal of Syria, the Apollo of Greece.

Of all these figures the members were variously combined, but the same members generally chosen from each one. It is the horse with the wings of the eagle, the body and lower members of the bull with the wings of the eagle and the head of a man; or the lion with the wings of the eagle and the head of a man; or a

man with the wings and head of an eagle; or some one of these creatures with all its proper members and the addition of wings. The most common symbols are the human head, the eagle's wings, and the body of the ox and lion. In all combinations the wings are the sign of spiritual being or mythological meaning: an idea perpetuated to modern times by the way in which artists persist in representing angels. The figure of the horse on those monuments is not combined with anything but wings. The Greek Pegassus has obviously his origin in the spirited figures of the winged and soaring Assyrian horses.

Among all these mythological figures there is only one in heaven and one upon earth before which men are represented as kneeling and raising their hands in prayer, and these two apparently unite in one meaning. The one in heaven is placed directly above the one upon earth, and both are addressed simultaneously. The sacred wheel, without doubt, signifies the sun, but whether the sun was regarded by those nations as merely a symbol of God, or as itself the actual glory of God, as the sky was thought to be the solid firmament of heaven, may still be a matter of question.

Of the antiquity of these monuments our estimate may be in some cases very wide of the mark, but some of them determine themselves. Clearly they are of various dates, more than a thousand years before Christ, and none of them can be much less than seven hundred years older than that era. And as the whole tendency of religious history in the Semitic and Hamitic east, in those ages, was to the multiplication of objects of wor-

ship, such testimony seems to declare the monotheism of earlier times.

Of all historical countries, Egypt is the oldest in idolatry, the mother of errors and corruptions in religion, which spread abroad to the contamination of her ancient neighbors, and have not all disappeared to this day. There is no date upon her monuments so ancient as to precede her idolatry. And yet the monumental history of that idolatry evinces a progress which seems to have sprung from a simpler faith.

Egypt was not originally one, but several; the establishment of her government was not by the radiation of influences from one city, but from many. Certain centres of settlement remained the seats of authority for their respective districts. Memphis, On, This, Choïs, Thebes, Zoan, Bubastis, wielded each a jurisdiction of its own, growing up from its own proper resources, by its own proper progress. Each one had also its own god. Memphis worshipped Phtah; On, Ra; Bubastis, Pasht; Thebes, Amun, and so on. The subsequent union of all the cities and districts under one crown brought all their gods into one pantheon. And Egypt became polytheistic at once by the very act of union.

Memphis was the first capital to assert dominion over all that was then called Egypt; and, accordingly, the name of Phtah stands first on all the lists of the divine sovereigns. When the supreme honor was transferred to Thebes, her kings gave Amun the place of superiority, but without prohibiting, or perhaps interfering with the worship of their own deities by the

different provinces. In some cases these latter were subsequently combined with Amun, and their worship modified accordingly, as if there had been a mutual recognition of their respective gods as intrinsically one. Greeks, when at a later time they accepted Egyptian views, also introduced their principal god into Africa as Jupiter-Amun. Thus objects of worship were multiplied in that country by the very process whereby the nation grew in united power and harmony. For the deity which was sole in each city, became only one of many when all the cities were united in one kingdom. And then imagination co-operating with superstition, in course of time, extended the mythology of Egypt indefinitely.

And yet, after all, certain great common impressions of God exhibit themselves in the religion of the whole people. High above all, the worship of one god was supreme. In order to a just apprehension of this fact, it is indispensable to emancipate one's mind from the ideas presented by the monuments of later ages, and the writings of Greeks, who knew Egypt only in her decline, and to confine attention to testimonies of the truly ancient alone. A ruling passion of the Egyptian people was that of seeking to picture every thing to the eye. Figures of the animate and inanimate, of the brute and human were combined, blended or transposed to subserve that end. The products of hero-worship are mingled in their later mythology incongruously and monstrously; but over and above all, the one god everywhere recognized in Egppt was the sun; or, perhaps more correctly, God as represented by the sun.

For the pictorial tendency of the Egyptian, what image could be more suitable to depict the divine glory? The image of the sun is the commonest of all Egyptian images, from one end of the land to the other, and in all periods of its ancient history: and Ra, the name of the sun-god, occurs more frequently than any other divine name. It was also combined with the names of some of the local gods, when their worship became general, by way of recognizing them as manifestations of Ra. Thus Amun, the god of Thebes and of Æthiopia, when accepted generally in the lower as well as upper country, became Amun-Ra; Mando, on the western side of the Delta, became Mando-Ra; Horus became Horus-Ra; Kneph became Kneph-Ra. And the king of all Egypt was Se-Ra, a son of Ra, that is, a son of god. Attributes belonging to the same great natural symbol are embodied in the oldest gods, created by the impulse of hero-worship. And the same monotheistic idea evinces itself in the midst of polytheism, in the fact that, while the kings received or adopted various names and titles from various local gods, as the favorite of Pthah, the beloved of Amun, the beloved of Thoth, and so on, they all claimed the same relation to *Ra*, and all wore his sign upon their ring. Moreover, there is a similar meaning in the simplicity of the earlier mythology, as compared with the later, and in that the earliest is the simplest. And, to the last, the doctrine of unity in plurality was held as fundamental in Egyptian theology.

As far as respects the object of worship, the religion of Æthiopia was the same as that of upper Egypt.

Thebes recognized Æthiopia as the holy land of her faith.

Protestant missionaries in China, it is well known, have experienced some difficulty in selecting a fitting term for God. That, however, has not arisen from a lack in the Chinese language, but out of certain conditions which the missionaries propose. They require, a word which shall properly render the Hebrew Elohim and the Greek Theos, a word which has not been appropriated to any idolatrous and otherwise debasing idea, and some add, a word, which has not been so pre-occupied by Roman Catholic missionaries as to be a mark of their faith. A term meeting all these conditions it would not be easy to find in English. Several in Chinese are mentioned as meaning God, but liable to one or other of the objections mentioned. Shang-ti etymologically signifies the Supreme Ruler, but is also used in the service of idolatry, and as the name of an idol, and would be as unsuitable for the purpose of the missionaries as the word Jupiter would have been for an apostle to use in ancient Rome. Tien-chu, heaven's lord, is also an ancient Chinese name for God, but some object to it on the ground of its being so completely adopted by the Jesuit missionaries, that the Chinese look upon those who use it as Catholics. And the common name, Shin, is thought to be unsuitable, because it means god in every variety and degree. The difficulty, accordingly, is not due to any unusual lack in the Chinese language; for the very same, if we regard it as such, exists in our own. God, or a god is, in English, used for every thing that has ever been an

object of worship anywhere, as well as for the Hebrew Elohim, and that as freely by Catholics as by Protestants.*

But what is most to the point in our inquiry is the history of the word Shang-ti. In the most ancient portions of the Shoo-king it occurs as the name of the one sovereign God therein recognized. In later times the idea degenerated, and the name, from being applied solely to a spiritual almighty power, descended to rest upon a symbol of him, and finally upon the symbol as an idol, becoming lost thereby in the service of idolatry alone. That debasement is a valid objection to the use of it by Christian missionaries; but cannot stand in the way of its interpretation in the ancient books consistently with the context in which it is found, any more than the base meanings, to which Deus was often put in heathen Latin, should forbid its proper meaning in a Christian classic. It occurs often in the Shoo-king, and, in all cases, consistently with the meaning of one supreme being, and sometimes inconsistently with anything less. The term Heaven is also used as a synonyme for God, and interchangeably; and sometimes also, Heaven and Earth; as if abbreviated for the God of heaven, or the God of heaven and earth.

A few extracts will illustrate this remark:

"When T'ang, the successful, was keeping Kĕe in banishment in Nau-ch'aou, he had a feeling of shame on account of his conduct, and said: 'I am afraid that in future ages men will fill their mouths with me.' On this Chung-hwuy made the following announcement:—'Oh! Heaven gives birth to the people with such desires that without a ruler they must fall into all disorders; and Heaven *again* gives birth to the man of

* "Proceedings of American Oriental Society," Oct., 1868, pp. 42–44.

intelligence, whose business it is to regulate them. The sovereign of Hea had his virtue all obscured, and the people were *as if they were* fallen amid mire and charcoal. Heaven hereupon gifted *our* king with valor and wisdom, to serve as a mark and director to the myriad states, and to continue the old ways of Yu. You are now only following the standard course, honoring and obeying the appointment of Heaven. The king of Hea was an offender, falsely pretending to the sanction of supreme Heaven, to spread abroad his commands among the people. On this account God viewed him with disapprobation, caused our Shang to receive his appointment, and employed you to enlighten the multitudes of the people."

"He who would take care for his end must be attentive to his beginning. There is establishment for the observers of propriety, and overthrow for the blinded and wantonly indifferent. To revere and honor the way of Heaven is the way ever to preserve the favoring regard of Heaven." *

"1. The king returned from vanquishing Hea, and came to Po. There he made a great announcement to the myriad regions.

2. The king said 'Ah, ye multitudes of the myriad regions, listen clearly to the announcement of me, the one man. The great God has conferred *even* upon the inferior people a moral sense, compliance with which would show their nature invariably right. *But* to cause them tranquilly to pursue the course, which it would indicate, is the work of the sovereign.

3. The king of Hea extinguished his virtue and played the tyrant, extending his oppression over you, the people of the myriad regions. Suffering from his cruel injuries, and unable to endure the wormwood and poison, you protested with one accord your innocence to the spirits of heaven and earth. The way of Heaven is to bless the good and to punish the bad. It sent down calamities on the house of Hea, to make manifest its crimes.

4. Therefore I, the little child, charged with the decree of

* "Chinese Classics," by James Legge, D.D., vol. iii., pp. 177–183.

Heaven and its bright terrors, did not dare to forgive *the criminal.* I presumed to use a dark colored victim, and making clear announcement to the spiritual sovereign of the high heavens, requested leave to deal with the ruler of Hea as a criminal. Then I sought for the great sage, with whom I might unite my strength, to request the favor *of Heaven* on behalf of you my multitudes. High Heaven truly showed its favor to the inferior people, and the criminal has been degraded and subjected. Heaven's appointment is without error ;—brilliantly now like the blossoming of flowers and trees, the millions of the people show a true reviving.

It is given to me, the one man, to give harmony and tranquillity to your states and families ; and now I know not whether I may not offend *the powers* above and below. I am fearful and trembling, as if I should fall into a deep abyss.

Throughout all the states that enter on a new life under me, do not, *ye princes,* follow lawless ways ; make no approach to insolent dissoluteness ; let every one observe to keep his statutes :—that so we may receive the favor of Heaven. The good in you I will not dare to conceal ; and for the evil in me I will not dare to forgive myself :—I will examine these things in harmony with the mind of God. When guilt is found in me, the one man, it will not attach to you who occupy the myriad regions.

Oh, let us attain to be sincere in these things, and so we shall also have a happy consummation : *

"The ways of God are not invariable," that is, He does not treat all with equal complaisance, "on the good-doer He sends down all blessings, and on the evil-doer He sends down all miseries." †

"It was not that Heaven had any partiality for the ruler of Shang;—Heaven simply gave its favor to pure virtue." "Good and evil do not wrongly befall men, because Heaven sends down misery or happiness according to their conduct." ‡

* Legge's "Chinese Classics," vol. iii., pp. 184–190.

† Ibid, p. 198. ‡ Ibid, p. 216.

"It is Heaven which is all-intelligent and observing." *

It seems of little matter what name is used in such passages as these. They sufficiently declare their own import, and must impress into their proper service any name that can be substituted for God or Heaven. Even were it Jupiter, we could not read to any length in that style without inferring that Jupiter must here mean the true God. It is only captious to stickle about an etymology or linguistic idiom in such a case. The context declares the purpose of the pious emperor T'ang to worship and reverence the almighty ruler of heaven and earth, and his laws alone to obey, as far as he was admitted to know them.

Mention is also made of spirits, and of Heaven and Earth as the parents of all material things, and sacrifices are offered on the mountains, or to the spirits of the mountains; as we read of worship in groves and upon high places in the history of Israel; but that is inferior, and not confounded with the worship of God.

Among the sacred books of antiquity, outside of the Bible, there is no plainer recognition of the supreme authority of one personal God than in the utterances of some of the ancient Chinese monarchs. The progress of national religion in China, as elsewhere, has been that of degeneracy tending into the multiplication of gods, and the assumption of objects of worship from various sources; and then the separation of the learned from the unlearned by a pantheistic, or otherwise godless philosophy.

* Ibid, p. 255.

CHAPTER VI.

SUMMARY.

From no quarter have we records so ancient as to be contemporaneous with the beginning of religion; but those which are most ancient, present it in a simpler form than it afterwards assumed, in their respective connections. Their theology is either monotheistic, as in the case of the Hebrews and Persians, or a merely rudimentary polytheism, still embodying the belief that, in the highest sense, Deity is one.

Subsequent progress did not go to simplify theology in that respect, but to make it more complex. It is not by following the history of religion downward that we find ourselves approaching the doctrine of one personal God; but when we follow it up the stream of time, towards the sources of the Vedas, and when we look beyond Moses to the days of the early Hebrew patriarchs. And every subsequent change from the worship of many gods to a true religious monotheism—I say religious, because I am not now speaking of philosophic abstractions—has been a conscious return to the simpler doctrine as that of an earlier time. Such was the reform under the hand of Moses, that which took place at the restoration of the Jews; such the reform of the Persian religion under Zarathustra; such the teaching of Jesus, who introduced no new theology, but a fuller and

clearer revelation of that made known to Abraham; such was the protest of Mohammed, and such the great reformation of a later time. Not one of them professed to teach the doctrine of one God as a conclusion arrived at, but all as a return to primitive instruction.

The testimony is such as to be fully consistent with the statements of Genesis, in which God is represented as making himself known equally to all mankind, when all mankind were yet one small community, and not in the way of a generalization, a philosophical abstraction, but simply as a person: that is, in just the best and most sensible way for the purpose of reaching all classes of minds.

The seminal principle of polytheism, out of which it either springs, or by the life of which it is supported, is the belief, or impression, that the Supreme Being works his purposes in the universe by personal agents. These agents became, in the progress of superstition, the gods of the pantheon. But in all cases, there was the fundamental idea that a greater power was supreme over all. To the fiat of such deity, whom no image represented, the ZEUS of the Greeks was destined to succumb, as his predecessors on Olympus had done. Such a sovereign was the ruler of all the gods revered by Rome. And on the same topic thus sings one of the Rishis of the Veda: "Who knows exactly, and who shall in this world declare whence and why this creation took place? The gods are subsequent to the production of this world; then who can know whence it proceeded; or whence this varied world arose; or whether it uphold itself or not? He, who in the high-

est heaven is the ruler of this universe, does indeed know; but not another can possess this knowledge." Among the inhabitants of Syria, idolatry made great progress after the time of Jacob, and the Israelites upon their return from Egypt, found them sunk in the depths of that error; and yet for centuries afterwards, a witness and remnant of original monotheism retained its place in the almost single devotion which the Sidonians and other principal nations of that country paid to him whom they called the Lord, pronounced in their different dialects Baal, Bal or Bel.

All the most ancient extant authorities, on the subject, either speak from a period of extant monotheism, or point back to it, as the antecedent, out of which they came. And when compared with succeeding authorities in the same line of succession, in no case do we find the progress to be in the direction of a purer monotheism, but the contrary. The progress, in all cases where there is progress, is towards a multiplication of gods, and the increase of distinctions between them: so that, in the regular course of development, they become, to the imagination of their worshippers, innumerable; and the distance between the highest and the lowest infinite.

That branch of the Aryan people, which settled in Greece, had a long journey to make before reaching the land of their final occupation. Many ages must have elapsed and many modifying events occurred between their removal from the home of their fathers, and their arrival on the shores of the Egean sea. But even that long wandering, in which they must have lost much of

the culture, whatever it was, with which they started, did not entirely deprive them of all features of the religion, in which their progenitors were educated. A great religious revolution passed over them at a subsequent time; but some features of the old faith, and dim fragmentary tradition of it, never entirely passed away. They lingered in local and tribal observances, were embodied in some of the more recondite productions of Greek literature, and still confront us with the mysterious charm of eld in some of the Epic hymns, in the Theogony of Hesiod and the Prometheus of Æschylus. We meet them in the myths of Uranus (Varuna) and further on to the west in those of Saturn and the golden days of the predecessor of Jupiter.

The earliest religion of Greece, as it appears in the Homeric poems, in the Theogony of Hesiod, in the Epic hymns and Orphic fragments, is a more advanced and complex mythology than the Vedic, and bearing distinct marks of having sprung from more than one source; but deep in the heart of its chaos of fable lie the radical elements of allegorical nature-worship, closely akin to that of the Veda. The Epic hymns, although of a later origin and belonging to ages when the idea of the divine nature had lost much of its impressive solemnity, are obviously of the same literary and religious descent. The Greek was of a gayer nature than the Hindu, and treated the god of his belief with a levity very unlike the simple earnestness of the Veda, and the Orphic utterances are vague and shadowy as compared with those of either the Veda or Avesta, but it is clear that they follow in the traditionary sequel of such productions.

Names of gods, in any system of polytheism, are for the most part figurative language. They add the idea of personality to objects or operations of nature; and that personality they ascribe to deity. Some are of later origin than others, and have grown out of a preceding usage of more ancient terms. They are the fruit of a growth, which could not have been other than slow; and that from which they grew up was, to say the least, a simpler system.

The names imply attributes, and the only element of meaning common to them all is personal deity. The attempt to separate deity from personality always abandons the names, and aims at abstraction.

The system may not have arisen immediately from a pure monotheism; it is not easy to find in practice a pure monotheism, including all the admitted attributes of deity; but it certainly points back in that direction; as if the idea, more or less crude, of one Supreme Being had been at the beginning of it.

Polytheism is a growth, and Pantheism is an effort of educated thought; the most elementary conception of God, and the most easily apprehended by the common mind is that of an invisible person.

CHAPTER VII.

DIVINE NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES.

Upon consulting the same ancient books to learn what their authors believed of the nature of God, the first thing that occurs is his personality. On this point they all agree, and their testimony is unequivocal and apparently unconscious. They give no sign of being aware of any other idea of God. That he is a person is no where asserted controversally; but everywhere implied or declared as if it had never been doubted. Genesis presents him as creating man in his own image, after his own likeness, and the first man as hearing him speak and conversing with him. And consistently, throughout the book, God is a person, every thing said about him implies it. In the Gathas, Mazda is the first of holy beings, Zarathustra has conferences with him, proposes inquiries to him, and receives answers.

"Here praise I now Ahura-Mazda, who has created the cattle, who has created purity, the water and the good trees,

Who has created the splendor of light, the earth, and all good,

To him belongs the kingdom, the might, the power.

We praise him first among the adorable beings."*

3. "What I ask thee, tell me the right, O Ahura.

* Yasna, 37. 1-4.

Who was the father of the pure creatures at the beginning?
Who has created the way of the sun, of the stars?
Who (other than) thou (canest) that the moon waxes and wanes?
That Mazda. and other (things) I desire to know."

7. "That will I ask thee, tell me the right, O Ahura.
Who has created the desired wisdom together with the kingdom?
Who created through his purity the love of father to son?
For these things turn I myself most to thee,
Heavenly, holy Creator of all things." *

The next hymn is given as the revelation of Mazda to Zarathustra.

3. "Now will I say to you what, as the first in the world,
The wise Ahura-Mazda has said to me."

He goes on to speak of Mazda as the object to whom prayer is properly addressed, and says:

"May holiest, heavenly Ahura-Mazda hear it."

And again:

"May he through his understanding teach me the best." †

The already declared polytheism of the Vedas renders any remark under this head unnecessary in relation to them. The hymns, with the exception of a few of a philosophic nature, all relate to a personal god. Hindu pantheism was the fruit of subsequent Hindu philosophy, —the work of the Vedants and Upanishads of a later and greatly changed religion.

* Yasna, 43. 3. 7. † Yasna, 44.

In the relations of the personality to the spirituality of godhead, real or apparent, discord frequently occurs; but the earlier errors lean to the side of the former. The tendency is not that of diffusing the spirituality into vague abstraction, or generalization, but of reducing the personality to the definite features of human nature. Generalization is the work of philosophy; but the ages which produced the Vedas were not philosophical, though one or another of their poets may have given expression to certain adventurous speculations. The same is true of the periods to which the Hebrew narrative pertains. In the Avestan hymns there is more appearance of philosophy, but it is a moral philosophy, and the personality of God though not taught by precept, is consistently implied in its archaic simplicity. Their one God is distinctly a person.

The spirituality of the divine nature is fully implied in Genesis, where it is said that God created the heavens and the earth—the chaos out of which they were formed—in the fact, that he is represented as being in all places, and seeing, though often unseen, and that he communes with the spirit of the patriarch in sleep or in trance. And yet he is conceived of as having bodily parts. The wickedness of men grieve him at his heart; he smells a sweet savor in burnt-offering; he walks in the garden of Eden; he comes down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men build, and he appears to Abraham in human form, and Jacob believes that in the person, with whom he wrestled, he had seen the face of God. In succeeding Hebrew Scripture the spirituality of the divine existence is more explicitly

and fully expressed: while the anthropomorphic language diminishes; it could not, in the nature of human thinking entirely cease.

In the Gathas, Ahura-Mazda is expressly and repeatedly called a spirit, "the good spirit," the "holiest spirit, which prepared the very firm heaven." He is the lord of spirits, who "clothes the vital powers with bodies." * Nor has the conception of deity as spiritual abandoned the materializing imagery of the Veda. Indra is a "drinker of soma; he is a great drinker of the exhilarating soma mixed with barley. He and Vishnu drink together as much as they wish." Indra is thereby excited to mighty deeds. The poet prays that soma may pervade him. A more sensuous idea could not be connected with deity. And yet the worshipper did not divest himself of the belief that Indra was invisible, and that, although he came from afar, and was unseen, he could hear the prayer which his worshipper offered: and when present he was not expected to appear in sensible form. Occasionally, however, that was a special subject of petition; as in the beginning of the second hymn of the Rig-Veda. "Approach, O Vayu (deity of the air); be visible" †—implying, of course, that he naturally was invisible. At the same time the spirituality of God is not a prominent doctrine in the Hindu religion, and although implied in the earlier faith became in course of time more and more obscured by the increase of ritualism and idoltary until the ordinary worshipper had no idea of God apart from the image which he saw, while with the

* Yasna, 28. 1; 30. 5; 44. 5; 31. 11.

† Wilson's "Works," vol. ii. p. 50.

more intelligent it gradually assumed a place by itself, separated from all idol gods, in the abstract conception of Bram.

The practice, testified by all those ancient authorities alike, of addressing God in prayer and adoration at any place where the worshipper happened to be, implied the belief that the object of adoration was everywhere present, not confined to the walls of a temple, but equally near in the tent or under the open sky. Different persons invoking the same god in different places, far apart, create no difficulty in their belief. The language "God is in this place" or "God is not in this place," which occur in the Hebrew Scripture, and the prayer to Indra, or some other deity, to come from a distance, have reference to the manifestation of his presence and power in a certain place. Indra is invoked to come from afar; but if he were not present to hear the prayer where it is offered, its utterance would be in vain. Jacob was surprised to find God at Luz, but he had no hesitation in praying there to the God whom his father worshipped at Beersheba, and in expecting him to be with him and to provide for him wherever he went, although at the same time, equally present with his father's house in a far distant land. And yet, although thus implied, it does not seem to have been a fully apprehended conception. For forms of expression frequently occur which are at variance with it. The idea of an everywhere present person is beyond the capacity of human thought to think; and yet the fact men readily believe: as the idea of eternal duration no human mind can conceive, yet the fact is indisputable. In those most ancient relig-

ious authorities the fact of the divine omnipresence implied, and the frequently occurring language at variance with it, are true to both sides of the subject. In none of them is there any attempt to harmonize expression by suppressing either side.

God is always held to manifest his presence where his worship is observed correctly, or where punishment is to be inflicted upon his enemies. Human nature will express itself in its own way, even when dealing with ideas above itself. "Heaven and earth are insufficient for the birth of that Indra, who with his greatness rules over the leaders (of sacrifice) as the atmosphere encompasses the earth, so he encompasses (the three worlds), and being the master of the rain, he upholds the sky as well as the firmament and the earth."

The authors of those ancient books believed in a god who was almighty. "Indra," exclaimed the Rishi, "thou art king; they who are gods are subject to thee." But they differ in their ideas of the way whereby that work of almighty power was performed. That the same supreme power governs all things they also agree; but differ as to the agency by which he carries forward his designs. Indra "directs nature, he protects his own people, he gives them food and strength and long life," "he is the demolisher of his enemies," "he is the mighty one;" * but accomplishes his purposes by the putting forth of laborious affort; and has to be stimulated thereto by exhilarating drafts of soma. Ahura-Mazda works his will by the superiority of his fore-

* R. V. 11. 4.

sight and the instrumentality of holy spirits and of good men. His will is resisted, but not with ultimate success, by evil spirits and men who are led astray by them. Anra-Mainyas is the leader of opposition.

"Of those two heavenly beings, the bad chose the evil, acting (accordingly)

The holiest spirit, which prepared the very firm heaven (chose) the pure,

And those who make Ahura contented with manifest actions, believing in Mazda;" (that is the believers in Mazda, choose also the pure.)

"Of those two, the Daevas chose not the right, nor those deceived by them."

When the most wicked spirit had chosen the evil, he became aware of his danger, and was compelled to ask his own subjects what to do next. His followers arrayed themselves under the powerful spirit Aeshma, as their leader.*

"But to the other came Khshathra together with Vohu-Mano and Asha, strength gave Armaiti to the body continual."

"Then when the punishment comes for those evil doers,

Then delivers himself up to thee, O Mazda, Khshathra together with Vohu-Mano,

Whom Ahura commands, who gives to Asha the Drujas into the hand.

May we belong to thee, we who seek to further this world.

May the wise lords bring help through Asha.

Whoso is obedient here, will there unite himself with wisdom.

Then falls on the Drujas the destruction of annihilation.

They gather themselves swiftly to the good dwelling of Vohu Mano,

Of Mazda, of Asha, those who enlarge the glory of the good."†

* Spiegel's note.

† Yasna, 30.

"He is the good king (who) promotes purity with word and deed.
Such a one is to thee, Mazda-Ahura, the most helpful assistant." *

Thus it is taught that there is a world of good spirits and a world of bad spirits. The head of the former is Ahura-Mazda, of the latter Anra-Mainyas. But Ahura-Mazda is God; Anra-Mainyas is not a god, but simply a sovereign spirit among those who resist the good. Mazda accomplishes his government in spite of that opposition by reason of his power and the completeness of his foreknowledge, while his enemy fails from lack of foresight. And yet the conflict of the evil with the good goes on, with partial success, but real defeat, and doomed to ultimate overthrow.

The spiritual agency of Genesis is very limited. God works his will by an efficient fiat. He decrees, and it is done. He says let there be light, and there is light. The creation of man is not committed to any other being. God himself creates him by his word and breathes into him the breath of life. Man is not drawn into sin by the force of a world of evil spirits; he is seduced by argument and misrepresentations; and the seducer is the serpent. All succeeding evil in the world is referred to man's own corrupt heart. And although in later Scripture spiritual agencies both good and evil are more fully revealed, the efficiency of the divine purpose is never represented as impaired by, or dependent upon the action of either.

* Yasna, 31. 22.

Nothing is more fully pronounced in Genesis than the justice and holiness of the God of revelation. He sometimes puts his people to trial, as when he orders Abraham to sacrifice his son; but he never leads them into wrong. He is inflexibly just, and severe in executing justice upon the incorrigibly wicked; Cain is subjected to hopeless punishment; the old world is destroyed in the flood, and the cities of the plain are utterly extinguished. But towards the repentant sinner his mercy is tender, and exceedingly patient and forgiving. In punishing the first sin he blends blessing with penalty, Noah for his faith and devotion is spared from the general destruction, although far from faultless; Lot, for a similar reason, is saved from the ruin of Sodom, although still further from perfection as a moral man. The tenderness of God with the erring but sincerely repentant, and with those whose abiding purpose is to serve him, although they may be sometimes misled, is truly longsuffering. And that design of mercy is represented as an inherent purpose of the Divine mind, contemplating its proper objects even before they were born.

In like manner, the truthfulness of God, his justice and purity are most consistently taught in the Gathas. Nor is mercy for the repentant sinner left out of view. In the Veda the idea presented of Deity in these respects is grosser. The god, whose praises are sung is sometimes one palpably unjust and partial; but his partiality is always in favor of the worshipper, who offers him plenty of sacrifice. As a general thing, such a one will enjoy his favor right or wrong. Indra can be persuaded, bribed into defending any cause, by the gift

of soma, sacrifice, and charming song, hymning his praise. "He is a drinker of soma. His inebriety is most intense; yet he is benignant to those who praise him."* "Offer soma to the drinker of soma, to Indra, the lord of the thunderbolt; roast roasts: make him to protect us. Indra the giver is a blessing to him who gives oblations." "He whom Indra protects and the Maruts, he will come into stables full of cattle. He will when fighting obtain spoil, O Indra, the mortal whose protection thou shouldst be." Again, the Rishi addresses the same god thus: "If I were lord of as much as thou, I should support the sacred bard, thou scatterer of wealth, I should not abandon him to misery. I should award wealth day by day to him, who magnifies, I should award it to whosoever it be." "He who perseveres acquires spoil with his wife as his mate; I bend Indra, who is invoked by many for you, as a wheelwright bends a wheel made of strong wood." "O mighty Indra, we call upon thee as we go fighting for cows and horses."† And yet among these gross representations of God, there are passages of loftier conception and appeals to the divine mercy: as, for example, in the hymn already quoted: "Whenever we men, O Varuna, commit an offence before the heavenly host; whenever we break thy law through thoughtlessness; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy;" and in the following, from Yasna, xxviii.: "Make, O Mazda, those mighty who sing your manthras. I pray thee the best for the best." "The Lord pray I, may he be gracious to Frashaostra and to me, and to those to whom I am favorable."

* R. V. ii. iv. † Müller, "Hist. Sans. Lit.," pp. 543–545.

But their method of obtaining mercy is by the petitioner first amending his conduct, and performing the proper rites of worship, and thereby evincing himself as a fit subject to receive remission of the penalty due to his sins. The provision of a regular scheme of mercy is not mentioned; nor does it enter into the conception of their worship. The idea which the Veda presents of sacrifice is that of its being food and drink to the gods; and the Avesta, which rejects sacrifice, rests for acceptance with God upon chanting of the manthras and the attainment of moral purity. In the Hebrew Scriptures, a similarly sensuous idea is occasionally presented of God smelling a sweet savor in sacrifice, and it is declared that only the man of clean hands and pure heart shall ascend into the hill of God; but notwithstanding, the all-pervading idea of that rite is atonement, the shedding of blood for the remission of sin; sacrifice is valued only in that light, as representing a vicarious atonement, and the petitioner for mercy prays that God would "create in him a clean heart, and renew in him a right spirit." In Genesis this doctrine is but dimnly taught, more by implication than by precept, and might be overlooked, were it not followed up by the explicit and often repeated instructions of later Scripture.

That there is an eternal law of mercy in the divine nature is a truth but faintly outlined in Genesis, and in books of heathen Scripture has no place. Although the other attributes of Godhead mentioned or implied in the oldest books of Hebrew Scripture appear also in the heathen, there is undeniably something of inde-

scribable glory, majesty, and breadth in the character of Jehovah-Elohim, which has no equal in that of Ahura-Mazda, and much less in any of the divine impersonations of the Veda.

In short, it is established beyond all dispute that the oldest religions of the world—the oldest of which we know anything through their own sacred books, were religions which taught the doctrine of one God, three of them expressly and the other impliedly under natural impersonations. On this point, Prof. Max. Müller's opinion has been quoted already; Prof. Wilson is equally decided. "There can be," he says, "no doubt, that the fundamental doctrine of the Vedas, is monotheism." "There is in truth," say repeated texts, "but one deity, the supreme spirit." "He from whom the universal world proceeds, who is the Lord of the universe, and whose work is the universe, is the Supreme Being." Injunctions also repeatedly occur to worship Him, and Him only. "Adore God alone, know God alone, give up all other discourse;" and the Vedant says: "It is found in the Vedas, that none but the Supreme Being is to be worshipped, nothing excepting him should be adored by a wise man." Again, still writing of the Vedic hymns, the same author remarks: "It seems very doubtful, if at the time of their composition idolatry was practiced in India: images of the deified elements are even now unworshipped, and, except images of the sun, I am not aware that they are ever made. The personification of the divine attributes of creation, preservation, and regeneration, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, originate, no doubt, with the Vedas, but they are rarely

named, they are blended with the elementary deities, they enjoy no pre-eminence, nor are they ever objects of special adoration. There is no reason from the invocations addressed to them in common with the air, water the seasons, the plants, to suppose that they were ever worshipped under visible types. Ministration to idols in temples is held by ancient authorities infamous. Manu repeatedly classes the priests of a temple with persons unfit to be admitted to private sacrifices, or to be associated with on any occasion." "It is almost certain, therefore, that the practice of worshipping idols in temples was not the religion of the Vedas." *

Much in the Vedic hymns that passes for idolatry of nature, seems to be really nothing more than poetic personification. The Rishis abound in imagery as bold as that of the Hebrew prophets. In their language the clouds are cows, the rain their milk, the storm is a strong bull pursuing them; or they are spotted deer, and the lightning, the spears and daggers, the glittering ornaments of the storm-spirits; and the storm-spirits themselves, are the agents of Indra working his will, which he declares he could work as well without them. In a dialogue between Indra and the Maruts, they address him as follows:

"From whence, O Indra, dost thou come alone; thou who art mighty? O lord of men, what has thus happened to thee? Thou greetest (us) when thou comest together with (us), the bright (Maruts). Tell us then, thou with thy bay-horses, what thou hast against us!"

* Works of Prof. H. H. Wilson, vol. ii. pp. 51, 53, 54.

Indra replies:

"The sacred songs are mine, (mine are) the prayers; sweet are the libations. My strength rises, my thunderbolt is hurled forth. They call me, the prayers yearn for me. Here are my horses, they carry me towards them."

Again the Maruts speak:

"Nothing, O powerful lord, is strong before thee: no one is known among the gods like unto thee. No one who is now born will come near, no one who has been born. Do what has to be done, thou who art grown so strong."

Indra speaks:

"Almighty power be mine alone, whatever I may do, daring in my heart; for I indeed, O Maruts, am known as terrible: of all that I threw down, I, Indra, am the lord." *

The Maruts are but the agency of nature in the storm, pictured as the angels of Indra to that service. Indra is reverenced as alone the almighty God.

Polytheism in all countries, where we have any really ancient history of it, or testimony to its existence in different ages, is found to be a growth, expanding its branches and multiplying its objects of adoration with the lapse of time. The higher the antiquity to which we follow it up, the simpler it becomes, and the nearer does it approach to monotheism, and in some cases we positively reach that point.

As far as the most ancient history and relics of the most ancient literature bear testimony, the primitive religion of mankind was the worship of one God. That God was held to be the ruler of heaven and earth, to

* Max Müller, "Translation of the Veda," vol. i.

be a person, spiritual and invisible, although he could become visible, or evince his being by sensible means. It was believed that the operations of nature were the activity of his power; that he was everywhere present, and could hear the prayer addressed to him in all places; that he was just and severe in executing his righteous will; that he could be propitiated, and would be merciful to men, who did good and worshipped him; that he was almighty, could do whatsoever he decreed to do, and yet that evil was done in the world contrary to his will.

Such are features belonging to all the most ancient religions, which have left any records of themselves from which we can form a judgment. So far, the historical foundation of religion is one. Its evidences exist in the Veda, Avesta, and Shoo-king as truly as in Genesis. But in Genesis there is an additional feature, which does not appear in the other books, and that is the promise of a future and fore-decreed demonstration of God in mercy to mankind.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAN'S RELATIONS TO GOD.

MAN is regarded in all those ancient religious books as the creature of God, as capable of living in accordance with his will, as under natural obligation so to live, and as immediately responsible to God; but as having sinned, and thereby forfeited the divine favor. The two great sources of religion are the relation in which man feels that he stands to a Supreme Being and the revelation made to him. The good are those who respect those relations, the bad are those who neglect them. And the prevailing motive in religion is the craving of the human soul for internal peace and for deliverance from the ills of life which are viewed as the penalty of sin.

In the Shoo-king all men are held to be under law to God, by the law of their nature bound to obey his will, to reverence him in their hearts, and to seek his blessing in all their ways. All power is viewed as coming from God. By him kings were raised to the throne, and, when they violated his law, were driven from it. In address to the ancient and excellent emperor Yu, it was said, "Your virtue, O emperor, is vast and incessant. It is sage, spiritual, awe-inspiring, and adorned

with all accomplishments. Great Heaven regarded you with its favoring decree, and suddenly you obtained all within the four seas, and became sovereign of the empire." Yu replied: "Accordance with the right is good fortune; the following of evil is bad;—the shadow and the echo." *

On another occasion the same monarch speaks of a subordinate prince as "Ignorant, erring, and disrespectful. Despiteful and insolent to others, he thinks that all ability and virtue are with himself. A rebel to the right, he destroys *all the obligations of* virtue. Superior men are kept by him in obscurity, and mean men fill all the offices. The people reject and will not protect him. Heaven is sending calamities down upon him.' One of the councillors of the same emperor remarks that "It is virtue which moves Heaven; there is no distance to which it does not reach. Pride brings loss and humility brings increase:—this is the way of Heaven." †

Among the counsels of Kaou-yaou are the following: "Let not the emperor set to the rulers of states an example of indolence or dissoluteness. Let him be wary and fearful, *remembering* that in one day, or in two days, there may occur ten thousand springs of things. Let him not have the various officers cumberers of their places. The work is Heaven's;—it is men's to act for it." "Heaven greatly distinguishes the virtuous." "Heaven hears and sees as our people hear and see. Heaven brightly approves and displays

* "Chinese Classics," vol. iii., part i., p. 54.

† Ibid, pp. 64, 65.

its terrors, as our people brightly approve and would awe:—such connection there is between the upper and lower worlds. How reverent ought the masters of the earth to be!' *

In the speech at Kan, the emperor announces that "The prince of Hoo wildly wastes and despises the five elements, and has wildly abandoned the three acknowledged commencements of the year. On this account Heaven is about to detroy him, and bring to an end the favor it has shown him; and I am reverently executing the punishment appointed by Heaven." †

Although thus under natural obligation to do right, and constantly exposed to punishment if failing to comply with it, men were as a whole believed to be predominantly inclined to wrong. In the time of the excellent emperor T'ang, Chung-hwuy made the following announcement: "Oh! Heaven gives birth to the people with *such* desires, that without a ruler they must fall into all disorders; and Heaven again gives birth to the man of intelligence, whose business is to regulate them." "The king of Hea was an offender, falsely pretending to the sanction of supreme heaven, to spread abroad his commands among the people. On this account God viewed him with disapprobation, caused *our* Shang to receive His appointment and employed you (that is, the emperor T'ang, whom he is addressing) to enlighten the multitudes of the people." ‡

But even upon the inferior people God has conferred a moral sense, compliance with which would guide to

* Ibid, p. 74. † Ibid, p. 153. ‡ Ibid, p. 178.

righteousness, and that, although they are endowed with such desires that without a ruler, they will fall into all disorders.*

Obedience to the will of God is rewarded with his favor, and disobedience punished; and in both cases, children and subordinates are involved in the fate of their superiors. Together with the direct responsibility of the monarch to God, it is fully recognized that the highest aim of government is to promote the virtue and happiness of the people. Both are urged repeatedly in the Shoo-king, in connection with various historical events. They are the chief doctrines of the book. No mythology is mixed up with royalty; the king is simply a man; but by virtue of his accession to the throne he becomes the minister of God for the country over which he rules, and to God is he directly accountable for the way in which he rules; and his people partake in the reward or punishment with him. And the same divine law was extended to the lower animals, and to inanimate nature, as well as to the spiritual world. Thus, in the "Instructions of E," it is written:

"Of old the earlier sovereigns of Hea cultivated earnestly their virtue, and then there were no calamities from Heaven. The spirits of the hills and rivers likewise were all in tranquility, and the birds and beasts, the fishes and tortoises all realized the happiness of their nature. But their descendant did not follow *their example*, and great Heaven sent down calamities, employing the agency of our *ruler*, who had received its favoring appointment." †

* Ibid, p. 185. † Ibid, p. 193.

The benefits of virtue as the penalties of vice are hereditary, until forfeited or atoned for. Thus, from the same "Instructions:"

"Our king of Shang had brilliantly displayed his sacred prowess. When for oppression he substituted his generous gentleness, the millions of the people gave him their hearts. Now, your Majesty is entering on the inheritance of his virtue; everything depends on how you commence *your reign*. To set up love, it is for you to respect your relatives. The commencement is in the family and state; the consummation is in the empire." *

When kings do wrong, God admonishes them by his judgments: if they persist in evil, punishment lights upon them; they and their house are removed from the throne. Yu the Great sought for able and honest men to honor God, in the service of government. He was the founder of a dynasty. Kee employed cruel and selfish men; and was the last of his line to occupy the throne. T'ang the Successful "greatly administered the bright ordinances of God;" his reign was the most honored among the ancient. Show was wicked; "God sovereignly punished him." The throne was transferred to the house of Chow, which employed men who reverently served God.†

After death, the spirits of the good went to heaven. What came of the wicked does not appear. And as to any doctrine touching the nature of future rewards and punishments, these ancient fragments are silent. They

* Ibid, p. 125.

† Legge, "Prolegomena to Shoo-king," chap. v.

only mention such as are experienced in this life. They have no promise of rest, comfort, or glory beyond the grave; although it is undoubtedly to be inferred that the Chinese, who looked to heaven as the residence of the departed spirits of good men, believed it to be a place of blessedness. The worship of the Shoo-king is addressed to God, and, under him, to the six honored ones, and the local spirits; but its promises and denunciations pertain to earth and time.

The sovereign is the head of the moral system, who "having established his highest point of excellence, concentrates in himself the five happinesses; and then diffuses them so as to give them to his people." According to an ancient song, quoted as such in the Shoo-king, his moral character should be exalted:

"Without deflection, without unevenness,
Pursue the royal righteousness;
Without any selfish likings,
Pursue the royal way;
Without any selfish dislikings,
Pursue the royal path;
Without deflection, without partiality,
Broad and long is the royal path.
Without partiality, without deflection,
The royal path is level and easy;
Without perversity, without onesidedness,
The royal path is right and straight.
Seeing this perfect excellence,
Turn to this perfect excellence."

"This amplification of the royal perfection," continues the ancient book, "contains the unchanging *rule*,

and is the great lesson;—yea, it is the lesson of God." *

The virtue of the people is viewed as proceeding from the sovereign, and depending upon him. Accordingly, when he is an immoral man, the people suffer with him. "All the multitudes instructed in this amplification of the perfect excellence, and carrying it into practice, will approximate to the glory of the son of Heaven, and say 'The son of Heaven is the parent of the people, and so becomes the sovereign of the empire.'" As the basis of all virtue three great principles are enumerated, chiefly belonging to the character of a ruler. The first is correctness and straightforwardness; the second, strong government; and the third, mild government. In peace and tranquility, correctness and straightforwardness must sway; in violence and disorder, strong government; in harmony and order, mild government." "And of the five happinesses, the first is long life; the second is riches: the third is soundness of body and serenity of mind: the fourth is the love of virtue; the fifth is an end crowning the life. As to the six extremities, again, the first is misfortune, shortening the life; the second is sickness; the third is sorrow; the fourth is poverty; the fifth is wickedness; and the sixth is weakness." †

Little is said to suggest either hope or fear touching the nature of the life to come. That little, however, is not said in such a way, as to discredit the existence of a future life, but rather as presuming upon a universal

* Ibid, part ii., p. 331. † Ibid, part ii. pp. 328–343.

belief, which it did not occur to the writer categorically to assert.

Entirely similar is the attitude of the book of Genesis towards the subject. All its teaching is in the language of men who live with a view to a future life, but nowhere within its bounds is the doctrine of a future life taught. In no other book is the dignity assigned to man more exalted. He is made in the likeness of God and appointed to be worker together with God in governing the earth and its creatures: and in the first instance, he is holy as the Creator. By one false step he loses that original holiness, and becoming degenerate himself, transmits a degenerate nature to all his posterity. The rest of the book is the history of a series of means employed by God to rescue man, or at least some men, from the bondage of that hereditary corruption. The masses of mankind are mentioned chiefly as the subjects of government, but as acting with more individual responsibility than in the Shoo-king. In the latter, the masses of China are only subjects, their happiness or misery depends upon the moral character of their rulers. In Genesis the inhabitants of the cities of the plain of Jordan are sinners against the Lord exceedingly. It is not their kings who are charged with bringing punishment upon them, but that flagitious conduct which belonged to them all. So, in the destruction of the old world by the flood, it was not because their kings, but because the people themselves had sinned; because all flesh had corrupted his way, that the wrath of God fell upon them.

As in the Shoo-king, so in Genesis the Ruler of

heaven and earth is the object of worship, who exacts of men obedience to his will: and all mankind are, in both, held to be under primary obligation to worship and obey him; and in obeying him, to be doing the best that they can. Both books also make mention of inferior objects of religious veneration; but differ in that the Shoo-king records their worship with approbation; Genesis always with censure. The Shoo-king does not mention them as gods whose will is law, but as powerful spirits, who are to be propitiated with prayer and sacrifice. Genesis speaks of them as false gods, and of any regard to them as iniquity. In the ancient Chinese classic the king stands between his people and God, as an intercessor, if a good king; and a terrible calamity to the empire, if he fails in that office. In Genesis the patriarch or king is also an intercessor, but always subordinate to some greater intercession implied in sacrifice and promise. It is the peculiar and mysterious promise which pervades and gives much of its superior interest to the Hebrew book. Virtue in both is compliance with the will of God. And the Hebrew idea of man's relation to God differs from the Chinese in conceiving of it as nearer and more intimate by the remarkable elements of theophany and revelation. Obedience of implicit faith in the goodness and wisdom of God is the substance of religious life in both; but the faith of the Hebrew has for its object a specific promise, and the direction of a revealed word. The good emperor T'ang desires and labors to comply with the will of God, but has nothing save the light of nature and tradition to guide him; Abraham is per-

mitted to behold God, and to hear from the voice of God the instructions which are for him all sufficient. Of Genesis the great feature is revelation; of the Chinese classic, natural and traditional religion. Up to that point of difference the similarity of their doctrines is very interesting.

Vedic anthropology is more involved in the forms of a ritual, but in itself amounts to nearly the same substance. As the supreme ruler of heaven and earth is not so purely conceived of, so man's duty is estimated from a lower level. As Indra has boundless appetite for sacrifice and soma, the best work which man can do is to supply him with plenty of food and of the intoxicating beverage. Varuna is not so gross a deity; but the service most acceptable to him also is the offering of the altar. And yet, though these are the greatest of good works, certain moral duties are recognized as in accordance with the divine will, and the neglect of them is condemned as sin. To meet the favor of God, man must be either without blame or abundant in gifts of sacrifice. "Thou has chastized, lord of strength, the mortal who offers not sacrifice." But he is the defender of those who are desirous of his friendship. "For them thou hast uttered a shout to encourage them in combats; from thee they obtain many and many an enjoyment; anxious for food they obtain it from thee." The rewards expected are defence from enemies or their defeat, deliverance from sin, a place in heaven; but far more commonly the supply of material wants. The illustrious Rishi, Gritsamada, prays to Aryaman, Mitra, and Varuna, that by their guidance he may escape the

"sins which are like pitfalls." Honoring Varuna as the supreme monarch and guide of men he beseeches of him deliverance from sin. "Cast off from me sin, O Varuna, as if it were a rope." "Keep off all danger from me, Varuna, supreme monarch, endowed with truth, bestow thy favor upon me. Cast off from me sin like a tether from a calf. No one rules for the twinkling of an eye apart from thee." And Somahuti prays, that Indra may grant prosperity, increase of wealth, security of person, sweetness of speech, and auspiciousness of days." Indra, the frequenter of sacrifice, the patient expecter of viands, prevails over every enemy, is the ally of his worshippers, the sustainer of the world, the supporter of progeny, at once the destroyer of the malevolent, and an asylum for those who serve him; who expect of him every kind of affluence. He is worshipped for the sake of obtaining heaven. "I proclaim," sings the Rishi, "veneration to the mighty sun, to heaven and to earth, to Mitra, to the benevolent Varuna, to the conferrer of happiness, the showerer of benefits. Praise Indra, Agni, the brilliant Aryaman and Bhaga, so that enjoying long life we may be blessed with progeny, we may be happy, through the protecting virtues of the Soma." In the same hymn, Mitra and Varuna are glorified as the animators of mankind. They are invoked to protect their worshippers entirely unharmed by sin; they are praised as showerers of blessings, as protectors of cows, which they cause to return to their stalls; they are petitioned for success in battle, for rain, and the means of satisfying material wants, for food and riches; they are dis-

pensers of butter and make cows productive of milk.

Yet, together with that oft-repeated prayer for supply of material wants, the still more urgent craving of a soul, conscious of sin, makes itself heard; the prayer for pardon and deliverance from the bondage of indwelling iniquity. Men are viewed as chargeable with actually committed wrong, but also as lying under the burden of inherited guilt. "Was it an old sin, O Varuna, that thou wishest to destroy thy friend, who always praises thee? Tell me, thou unconquerable lord, and I will quickly turn to thee with praise freed from sin. Absolve us from the sins of our fathers, and from those which we have committed with our own bodies." *

Howsoever obtained, by prayer or by sacrifice, or by amendment of life, the favor of the Deity, and thereby pardon of sins, is considered indispensable to man's happiness. The wicked are under divine wrath and continually exposed to the infliction of punishment. And whatever the ancient Vedic idea of heaven, it was a place which sinners were not permitted to enter. "To Indra heaven, that excludes the wicked, verily has bowed." † It is the supreme object of prayer. "Hoping to partake of thy bounties (thy worshippers) hasten severally in every rite to (adore) thee, who ask, one and all, each severally seeking heaven. We meditate on thee, the sustainer of our strength, like a boat

* From a Vedic hymn, translated in Muller's "History of Sanskrit Literature," p. 541.

† R. V. ii. 131.

that bears (passengers) across a (stream): mortals indeed knowing Indra, propitiate him with sacrifices; mortals, with hymns." "Wilt thou (Indra) be present at this our morning rite, be apprized of the oblation offered with (due) observances; offered with due observances for the sake of (obtaining) heaven." In another verse of the same hymn, the persons offering the sacrifice, a husband and wife, are thus mentioned: "Thou well knowest that these two persons are desirous of cattle, are desirous of heaven."

It is clear that diversity of opinion existed among the authors of the hymns. Some believed that they could change the mind of God. Difficult it might be, but such the charm of their song, the prevalence of their prayer that they entertained no question of the effect. To propitiate Varuna they will "bind his mind with songs, as a charioteer a weary steed." Or the Rishi boasts that he "bends Indra," on behalf of the worshipper, "as a wheelwright bends a wheel of strong wood." Yet, underneath that confident profession; no doubt, the profession of a real belief, there lies the feeling of dependence upon the divine grace, which elsewhere breaks out in language equally strong. In hymns of other Rishis the humbler spirit prevails: and sometimes the expression of it is plain and full. The worshipper confesses his sins, trusts not in his ability to amend his ways, nor in the potency of his ritual observances, but in the mercy of God, which he earnestly implores.* Occasionally he hopes and prays

* See above on page 159.

with trepidation and doubt, the weakness and sinfulness of man being contrasted in his mind with the divine justice and power. "Wise and mighty are the works of him who stemmed asunder the wide firmaments. He lifted on high the bright and glorious heaven; he stretched out apart the starry sky and the earth. Do I say this to my own soul? How can I get unto Varuna? Will he accept my offering without displeasure? When shall I, with a quiet mind, see him propitiated?" * Yet the ever-reviving belief in the mercy of God encourages to persist in petition. Although just, the Deity has compassion on the repentant, who come before him as worshippers should come. "He is merciful even to him who has committed sin."

In the hymns of the Ayesta, doctrine is more positive, and more didactically expressed. Here also man is held to be under a native obligation to live in conformity with the divine will, and yet, is such by nature that without great effort, he is not able so to live. The holy Ahura-Mazda created all things; but the evil which, notwithstanding, is inherent in some spirits, continues to perpetuate a moral conflict. Thus, in the first Gatha:

"Teach thou me, Mazda-Ahura, from out thyself, from heaven, through thy mouth whereby the world first arose." †

"When both these heavenly beings (Ahura-Mazda and Anra-Mainyas) came together, in order to create at first life and perishability, and as the world should be at last, the evil

* Müller, "History of Sanskrit Literature," p. 540.

† Yasna, xviii. 11.

for the bad, the best spirit for the pure; of those two heavenly beings the bad chose the evil, acting (accordingly), the holiest spirit which prepared the very firm heaven (chose) the pure: and those who make Ahura contented with manifest actions, believing in Mazda (also chose the pure)."

Mankind are accordingly of two classes, one class yield to their propensities for evil, the other, earnestly seek wisdom and holiness. Both advance their cause by teaching. "Reciting to you these perfections, which have not yet been heard, we teach the words against those who destroy the world of purity with the teaching of the Drujas." *

In the conflict with the evil, good men are sustained by the power of God. Ahura-Mazda fashioned "the pure creation; he upholds the best soul with his understanding." † The favor of God to good men is shown by making for them provision in this life. He is praised as the creator of the cattle, "who fashioned the cow," "and created ways for her," "who created the cattle," "the water and the good trees;" but the all-pervading subject of the Gathas, and the boon chiefly asked of God is purity, and with it happiness and immortality. "The best purity we praise; what is fairest, what pure, what immortal," is ever the recurring theme. Of all ancient heathen productions, the Gathas are the most consciously expressive of a spiritual religion, and they are almost entirely free from admixture with anything else, bearing most distinct marks of being the product of one pure, spiritually aspiring mind.

* Evil spirits. Yasna, xxxi. 1. † Ibid. 7.

The happiness of the righteous is also contrasted with the "destruction of annihilation," which is to fall upon the evil spirits, and the future punishment of bad men.

"Now will I say what as the first in the world,
The wise Ahura-Mazda has said to me:
'He among you who will not act according to this Manthra,
Namely according to the spirit as well as the word,
To him will the end of the world turn to downfall.'"

The power of Buddhism, whereby it took hold of the vast population, still bearing its name, was the promise which it held forth of deliverance, from all the ills of human life. Attention was turned from the complicated mythology of the Brahmans, and its cumbersome ceremonial, to what man can do for himself by following the example of Buddha, in which the first element was self-denial, including the subjugation of all affections and desires. The sole end contemplated, was such complete extinction of all disturbing affections, that nothing could ever break the spirit's repose. A negative religion, it sought its end, not by doing good, but by shunning the risk of suffering. Originally, the Buddhist doctrine of Nirvana was the end of successive transmigrations, when the soul separated from the principle which produces in it new births, passes into that state in which all capacity for suffering is dead. It is the end of all activity; the perfect and everlasting repose of the soul. Later commentators, with their refining speculations, have corrupted that original form of the doctrine, reducing it to a bald nihilism, and in so doing, have sapped the stronghold

of their faith. Nirvana, they say, is the highest good that can be contemplated by a saint, and only the most exalted saints attain it. Buddha himself has attained it. Asserting that he still is, they cannot say that he is here, or that he is there; as when a fire is extinguished, it cannot be said that it is here or that is there. Such extinction has Buddha attained. But he lives in his discoveries. Others say that though death is the dissolution of that which now exists, "it is not the annihilation of a potentiality inherent in that existence." * Such empty abstractions, such a promise of nonentity would never have converted the millions, who, in ancient times, received with avidity the religion of Buddha. We may rely upon it, that it was something that spoke more practically to the common wants of man. It is not death which the human spirit craves, but life—life, unharassed by pain and sorrow. Prof. Müller's recent lecture at Kiel, carries with it a rational conviction that he has, at length, reached the true view of that doctrine, which has proved attractive to so many of our race.†

Buddhism is the only ancient religion represented in existing books or monuments, which reposes all the good that a man can hope for, entirely upon himself. As far as the heaven which it promises is concerned, there is nothing for God to do, but simply to keep the existing universe in operation. All else, the human

* Rev. Spence Hardy, "Manual of Buddhism." Hodgson, "Sketch of Buddhism."

† M. Müller's "Chips from a German work-shop." Lecture before the Philological Society at Kiel. Introduction to Buddaghosha's Parables.

soul does for itself: and the aim is not to attain glory or positive blessedness, but merely such a state of inactivity of all its powers, that suffering shall be impossible. It is also a religion of comparatively recent origin, without a claim to inheritance from antiquity.

All the other documents under consideration were produced under the conviction that man is a sinner, dependent for any good he may do, for any success he may achieve, for any spiritual happiness he may enjoy, and for deliverance from the penalty due to his sins, mainly, to the mercy of God. Yet, all of them take him to have the ability to do what God commands him: and to be deserving of approbation for compliance, and of censure for disobedience. In the book of Genesis another element is also introduced, and special privilege or privation assigned by God to certain individuals, antecedent to any action of theirs, sometimes, even before their birth. Although, not without recognition in the Chinese and Hindu ancient books, it is an element essentially belonging to the doctrine of the Hebrew, as inseparable from the inheritance of promise.

CHAPTER IX.

WORSHIP.

UNDER the prevailing sense of sin and liability to punishment evinced in all the monuments under consideration, it seems to have been felt that something was needed to be done in order to propitiate the divine favor. In the more ancient, sacrifice was the central observance of religion, and prayer, in all cases, its utterance. God was expected to be merciful to those who approached Him with humble petition, and offering of something precious to themselves, or held to be acceptable to Him, or significant of expiation. An altar was erected for the purpose of receiving and holding up towards heaven, the offerings made to the Deity, which consisted of fruit, bread, or animals, or of some precious liquid, wine, ardent spirits, oil, or soma.

Universally, the highest importance was attached to the offering of animals slain, and burned, either in whole or in part, upon the altar. Buddhism and Parsism, which rejected sacrifice, were both of comparatively recent origin, and each, the fruit of a philosophy; the old national creeds, from Egypt to China, determined the efficacy of all other religious observances in

relation to burned offering of something which had enjoyed life.

What the origin of sacrifice, no history records. Left to conjecture, men take up with the view which best falls in with their preconceived notions. Its object was, most commonly, in some undefinable way, to propitiate the favor of deity, or to recognize it by thanksgiving. More than that does not appear in the Shoo-King. That ancient historical classic gives no hint of a doctrine of expiation. Its religion is one of virtue:—do good and live; do evil and die; or reform, become virtuous, and avoid punishment. Neither in Genesis is the piacular import of sacrifice clear: were it not for subsequent scripture, we should have no certainty that such a meaning was intended. An expression of faith in a present God, an act of propitiation and thanksgiving, or the pledge of a covenant is all that is obvious on the page. In Vedic theology, purity of life is not an indispensable condition for receiving, and enjoying the favor of God: mercy for a suppliant sinner is fully recognized as belonging to the divine nature; and sacrifice and prayer as the only way of obtaining it. And yet, that beautiful truth is incongruously mingled with the very grossest notions of sacrifice as being food, and exhilarating drink for the god, by the use of which he is persuaded to comply with the wishes of his worshippers.

In performance of the rite, the most sacred act was the burning of the victim. A sanctity was thought to be conferred upon the offering by the touch of fire. To such an extent was this idea carried, in some

places, that the altar-fire became an object of veneration. By the Hindus it was personified as the agent of the gods, itself a god, through whom the rest were made propitious. And the Avesta, which rejected sacrifice, retained the veneration of fire as purest of the elements. Subsequently, in the Mosaic ceremony, the shedding of blood assumed the place of first importance.

Already in the Rig-Veda, some of the materials employed, as the soma for libations, were also deified. A simpler faith evinces itself in Genesis, and in the Chinese historical classic. In both, the materials are entirely natural, free from all mysticism and personification. The altar is simply a little structure of earth, or of rough stone, sometimes hastily put up for the occasion. When Abraham went to sacrifice in the land of Moriah,* he gave the wood to his son Isaac to carry, while he took the fire in his hand, and a knife. Nothing more was thought needful, except a lamb to offer. Abraham expected to perform the whole ceremony himself, as he built the altar with his own hands, after arriving at the place appointed. Neither the fire nor the wood are conceived of as having in them anything different from other wood and fire. In like manner, the Chinese prince offers up his sacrifice at one place and another, among the mountains,† in the process of clearing them of their superfluous timber. In neither case is any importance attached to the parts of the service, other than that which belonged to the act as a whole. On that last also, the two books, to a great extent, agree. Sacrifice is acceptable to God, not

* Genesis, xxii. † Legge, "Shoo-King," p. 141.

as food and drink, but as expressive of the feelings of his worshippers. In Genesis, He is said to smell a sweet savor,* when an offering was made; but never to accept it as viands: and in the Shoo-King, so little is said of the forms of observance, that it is plain they were few and simple, if they had any importance beyond that of the necessary work. Among the counsels of Yuĕ, it is said, that "officiousness in sacrifice, is called irreverence; ceremonies, when burdensome, lead to disorder." Upon this text, Dr. Legge remarks, that "later times charge the Chang dynasty with being superstitious. Officiousness—sacrificing unnecessarily to certain spirits, and at unnecessary times†—and the attempt to please them by the multitude of observances would seem, therefore, to be the things here condemned." Positive restraints were put upon the development of superstition in that direction. So, in the "Announcement concerning Lo," the duke of Chow said; "Let the king at first employ the ceremonies of Yin, and sacrifice in the new city, doing every thing in an orderly way, but without any display." Further on, the king recurs to the same principle,‡ in regulating the order for the sacrifices, and "doing everything in an orderly manner without display." Shun, the great statesman of two thousand years before Christ, commenced his labors as co-emperor with "a special sacrifice, but with the ordinary forms to God." He also "sacrificed purely to the six honored ones; offered their appropriate sacrifices to the rivers and hills; and extended his worship to the hosts of

* Genesis, viii. 21.

† Legge, "Shoo-King," p. 258. ‡ Ibid, pp. 438, 443.

spirits." Subsequently, in the progresses which he is reported to have made to the different mountains, where he met the princes of the several quarters of the empire, he always commenced his proceedings with them, by presenting a burnt-offering to Heaven, and sacrificing in order to the hills and rivers." "It was the duty of all men to reverence and honor God, by obeying his law written in their hearts, and seeking his blessing in all their ways; but there was a solemn and national worship of Him, as ruling in nature and providence, which could only be performed by the emperor. It consisted of sacrifices, or offerings rather, and prayers."*

The most ancient Chinese worship of ancestors was conducted with sacrifice. "When Yaou remitted to Shun the business of the government, the ceremony took place in the temple of 'the accomplished ancestor,' the individual to whom Yaou traced his possession of the supreme dignity; and while Yaou lived, Shun, on every return to the capital from his administrative progresses, offered a bullock before the shrine of the same personage."† Already, in China, there is a progress in idolatry similar to that recorded of the contemporaneous people of Canaan and Mesopotamia.

A more matured ceremonial belongs to the Veda: and the deification of fire, as the god who renders the offerings of the altar acceptable, evinces the attachment of a greatly increased importance to the means and material of the rite. But the materials themselves were the same, and the process not essentially different.

* Legge, "Prologomena to Shoo-King," pp. 193, 194.
† Ibid, page 195.

In all cases, the principal animal for the great sacrifices, was the bullock; on other occasions, other domestic animals, and all without blemish. The horse, never offered by the Hebrew, but sometimes in Assyria, was, among the Hindus, a less frequent, but most highly honored victim. This sacrifice was attended with some special ceremonies; and in the great hymn for the occasion, the horse is himself exalted as divine. He is praised in all his limbs, as alive, and as slain, with honors belonging to an intercessor for man with God.

Libation of oil is mentioned in Genesis, although not earlier than the history of Jacob.* In the Shoo-King, alcoholic spirits are ordered to be used for sacrifice, and for that purpose alone; and in the Veda, the sacred drink-offering is the juice of the Soma plant expressed and prepared for that purpose by a process, itself religious.

Altars, with their offerings of bread and fruit, and the process of preparing the victim for sacrifice and pouring of libations, appear also upon many of the monuments of Egypt; and upon those of Assyria, although the whole process is not depicted in such connected scenes, the various parts are as distinctly portrayed. On one monument stands the sacrificial altar, with the king in sacerdotal robes, on another a sacrificial priest with the attire and implements of his office, and on others are priests of various ranks and classes, with their symbols and offerings. The Hebrew

* Genesis, xxxv. 14.

authority, upon which we rely for the practice of the Hebrew patriarchs, bears testimony also to other nations, with which they had dealings leading to religious observances between them.

Human sacrifice, at a later time fearfully common among the nations of Syria, is without example at the date of which we are now speaking.

Recognition of God's right to and ownership of all things, and that man is only his tennant upon earth, seems to be implied in the choice of the best for a victim. The worshipper thereby expressed his gratitude for the gifts conferred, and his devotion of himself and all that he held most precious to the service of God. Corruption in her progress, very easily deduced from this doctrine, that a man's own child must be of all victims the most acceptable. In securing the divine favor, pardon of sin was expected, and the idea prevailed to some extent, that the death of the victim was a substitute to bear the punishment due to him who offered it; although we should perhaps never have learned that doctrine, had we been confined to the testimony of these most ancient books alone.

Whatever may be said of the origin of sacrifice, that it was the fruit of a human thought, or instituted by the command of God, the universality of it is not the less remarkable. That a gross and ignorant people might readily conceive of their god as needing food like themselves, does not meet all the conditions of the case. We have also to take in the fact of similarity, if not identity in all the principal forms of conducting the ceremony, the altar, the victim, the fire, the burning,

and the fundamental ideas expressed thereby, and that in nations so far apart and so long separated as Egypt, India, and China.

At the same time, the Deity was invoked with prayers and hymns of supplication, of adoration, of confession, petition, and thanksgiving. In those early days, the human impulse to prayer received this combined material and literary expression. The victim which burned on the altar carried the homage, gratitude, and devotion of the worshipper to heaven, and was accompanied by words of carefully constructed prayer. A profound feeling that words uttered before God should be well ordered, and like everything else presented to him, the best of their kind, led to the adoption of metrical forms. The hymn is the most ancient form in which public prayer exists. Beautiful songs newly composed were thought to be eminently prevalent with the Divine mind. Few such are recorded in Genesis, but the blessing invoked by Melchisedek upon Abraham, of Isaac upon his sons and of Jacob upon Joseph, are all prayers and all poetry. And as far as translated, a large proportion of the Vedic hymns are prayers, composed as such for sacrificial occasions.

The same elements of worship were observed by individuals for themselves, by the heads of families for themselves and for their household, and by nations in public. Sacrifice and prayer were the basis of all religious observance, alike in family and national worship. Noah, as soon as he issued from the Ark, built an altar to the Lord. Abraham, when taking up

his residence in Canaan, thus consecrated the place of his abode; and with the successive heirs of the promise made to him, the altar was the sacred adjunct of the homestead. Among their neighbors, those who are mentioned as worshipping God, observed the same forms. No allusion occurs in that time to a religion of any other type.

Yet, prayer was not by any means limited to being nothing else than an accompaniment of sacrifice. It is often uttered by itself and without a precomposed form, and as moved by the occasion. The belief existed then, as declared in later time, that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and that true prayer, in all its simplicity, was more pleasing to God, than the utmost pomp of state ceremonial could be without it. "At the end of three decades, the people of Meaou continued rebellious against the emperor's commands, when Yih came to the help of Yu, saying, 'It is virtue which moves heaven; there is no distance to which it does not reach. Pride brings loss, and humility receives increase:—this is the way of Heaven. In the early time of the emperor (Shun), when he was living by Mount Leih, he went into the fields, and daily cried with tears to compassionate Heaven, and to his parents, taking to himself and bearing all guilt and evil. At the same time, with respectful service, he appeared before Koo-Sow, looking grave and awe-struck, till Koo also became truly transformed by his example. Entire sincerity moves spiritual beings: how much more will it move the prince of Meaou." *

* Legge, "Shoo-King," p. 65.

Hardly can it be necessary to remind the reader of Genesis, of Jacob's prayer on the way to Padan-aram, or that at Mahanaim upon his return to Canaan, and other instances in which it was prompted by the occasion and without the presence of sacrifice.

The sacred songs of praise and prayer were in the first instances unwritten, and the sacrifice performed with simplest traditional rites on an altar in the open field, and unconnected with any temple structure. Genesis has no ceremonial, no formal hymns for recitation before the altar, no ritual prayers. The Shoo-King implies more stately apparatus, and the Veda has distinctly advanced more than one step further in the direction of legalism.

Thus we seem to have satisfactory proof that between fifteen hundred and two thousand years before Christ, the doctrines now mentioned and forms of worship were the same in all nations, the civilized world over.

CHAPTER X.

MINISTRY OF RELIGION.

THE ministers of that early religion were not a separate caste, or tribe, or profession, but persons whom natural relations pointed out for that office. The individual offered prayers and sacrifices for himself, the father for himself and his family, the head of the tribe for his tribe, and the king was the high-priest of his nation; and through the same persons, when God vouchsafed a revelation, revelation was made. Abraham worships for himself, and receives revelations for himself; he worships for his family, and receives revelations about his family and the nation to descend from him. The ruler, the priest, and prophet were one. It was a patriarchal system falling in with the primitive arrangements of social order. In Genesis, this is clear and indisputable. Such also was the state of things among the ancient Chinese. No sacerdotal or priestly class is mentioned in their records. "The chieftain was the priest for the tribe, the emperor for the empire, the prince of a state for his people, the father for his family."* At the date when the Vedic collection was

* Legge, "Prolegomena to Shoo-King," p. 193.

made, a different method had been introduced or had grown up in India; but still some of the hymns and certain hereditary practices, such as that whereby certain families had each their own sacrificial hymn, by a Rishi of their own number, pointed back to an origin in an earlier patriarchal state, when each family conducted its own religious service through its own patriarchal priest.

Subsequently the Brahmans gradually matured their liturgical services into a complete system, and succeeded in imposing it, as religion, and themselves as priests upon the whole of India. That monopoly was not however secured without a struggle. Some heads of noble families could not soon forget the rights and sacred duties, which had belonged to their predecessors, nor understand why the same should be forbidden to themselves. Visvâmitra, who was a member of the royal caste, had to struggle against the exclusiveness of the priests, "and succeeded in gaining for himself and his family the rights," which the Brahmans "had long withheld from all but their own caste. King Janaka of Videha again, whose story is given in the Brahmanas, refused to submit to the hierarchical pretensions of the Brahmans, and asserted his right of performing sacrifices without the intercession of priests."* Moreover, there were remnants of the more ancient practice, which the Brahmans could not or did not think it expedient to annul. "The Vedic literature, by the very sacredness of its character," was protected against the invasion of their remodelling touch, as the

* Müller, "History of Sanskrit Literature," p. 80.

Bible against mediæval priestcraft. In some cases, they even sanctioned the more ancient practice, "notwithstanding their policy of monopolizing and (so to speak) *brahmanizing* the whole Indian mind. Although, for instance, in the liturgic works annexed to the Vedas (Srauta-Sutras), an attempt was made to establish a certain unity in the sacrifices of the people all over India, yet, in the performance of these sacrifices there existed certain discrepancies, based on the traditionary authority of the wise of old, between family and family. This is still more the case in the so-called domestic ceremonies of baptism, confirmation, marriage, etc., described in the Grihya-Sutras, which, connected as they were with the daily life of the people, give us much more real information on the ancient customs of India than those grand public or private sacrifices, which are prescribed in the Srauta-Sutras, and could only have been kept up by sacerdotal influence. In these domestic ceremonies, everybody is allowed, as a general law, to follow the customs of the family to which he belongs, or of his village or country, provided these customs do not too grossly insult the moral and religious feelings of the Brahmans."* The reason for tolerating such family and local practices was solely that they had existed before the Brahmanical system arose, and had such hold upon the minds of those who practised them, that it was deemed unadvisable to attempt their abolition. That same patriarchal system, so distinctly recorded of the Hebrews and Chinese, is thus shown to have existed also among the

*Ibid, pp. 49, 50.

ancient Hindus, preceding all Brahmanical priesthood, and even the earliest of Vedic hymns.

In Egypt, about the same date, the national priesthood had already been organized, yet there also it had failed to eradicate all remnants of those primitive systems which interfered with its completeness, though in most cases it had succeeded in combining them harmoniously. Every temple had its own hereditary family priests, who were at the same time magistrates of the city and district, holding their power by the same right as the King held his." And "as to the Kings, they were at the head of the priesthood, and received religious respect accordingly. It was part of their duty to present the offerings at the altars of the temple, not only on their own behalf, but on behalf of the nation."* And the place occupied by the King on the religious monuments of Nineveh testifies to the same original state of the ministry in that quarter.

In the Gathas of the Avesta, as well as in original Buddhism, we have the doctrines of a philosophical reformation. Both, although themselves afterwards loaded with superstition, were originally attempts to break through the ceremonial, idolatry, and bondage of the hierarchical system, and to bring their believers, each for himself, immediately to God.

Thus, without preoccupying the reader's mind with theories to explain the why or the wherefore of anything, I have endeavored to present reliable testimony to the state of religion at the oldest date represented by historical documents. It has been found that they

* Sharp's "Egyptian Mythology," pp. 21, 26.

belong to all the great seats of ancient civilization, which are also the sources whence are drawn the germinal elements of all the civilizations which have flourished since their time. They are of the highest importance in relation to succeeding religious history. Whatever may have been their own beginning, they are historically determined as the sources of all subsequent religion. Exeptions, if any, are to be found only in the depths of barbarism.

CHAPTER XI.

RECAPITULATION.

In the early history of the world there were three seats of civilization, apparently equal in antiquity, but different in some features. The first, with which we have also the fullest acquaintance, lay adjoining to the eastern coast of the Mediterranean sea, the second in India, and the third in China. All three are found in their respective maturity when first the light of history rests upon them. The origin of their culture, and the process whereby it became what it was, is recorded in only the case of the first, and that not of the whole group of nations of which it consisted. Only the Hebrews present a plain connected narrative of their growth from the beginning. As a help towards interpreting the obscurer literature of the rest, that account is of the utmost value. It relates the history of a patriarchal period, when their people consisted of but one family, then of a group of families held together by simple patriarchal bonds, and then of their existence as a nation, under the rule of a code of prescribed laws. All is distinctly recorded together with the revolution whereby the latter change was made; as well as a subsequent change to a freer and more exalted culture

than either, in a series of naratives exhibiting the best features of genuine history.

In the other countries mentioned, although there are no such connected records, books of a very high antiquity are found, which determine the contemporaneous state of religion and to some extent, of society. The later Vedas and books subsequent to the Vedas bear evidence to a change in the style of religion in India, from the simple and patriarchal to the ceremonial and legal, although no revolution is mentioned as having brought it about. In the course of ages, national observances, strictly prescribed by law, took the place of the earlier patriarchal rites, and have succeeded in holding their ground until the present. In China, all that is really religion to the masses, is not only still patriarchal, but presents the forefathers of the family as the objects of its worship.

A nation's religion determines the great features of its civilization. Accordingly, we have, in the west, a civilization of the first mentioned variety, in India of the second, and in China of the last. History follows chiefly the western, for her own sufficient reason, that in that quarter there has been, from the first, a continual progress. In China, the progress made is all ancient, that is, in the ancient style. Its limits and character were determined in the youth and maturity of the patriarchal system, beyond which it has never advanced. When that particular style had ripened its fruit, it could proceed no further, and no new style being introduced, the old continues to this day. India retains the old legal style, as she retains upon the whole,

her legal religion. It is the type which prevailed also in the Græco-Roman world before the rise of Christianity. Towards the west, progress passed not only through all the three stages mentioned, but also through many variations within the bounds of each: and transcending the limits of her original home, eagerly sought acceptance elsewhere. In brief, her efforts, though made with great perseverance also eastward and southward and northward, were successful only in the direction westward.

Accordingly, History, though not overlooking the work done in the cause of human improvement elsewhere, takes her starting point from Egypt and Western Asia, follows the footsteps of her subject along the peninsulas of Europe, and by the path of Christian persuasion, until they reach the western ocean. China remains in the oldest style of culture, has perhaps made the most of it, and has all along consistently defended it; India has done the same for the legal, and both have gone beyond the complete into the monstrous, and evince no capacity of themselves to escape from its bondage.

The great religions of the world, ancient and historic, are, first, the Hebrew and Christian; second, the Egyptian; third, the Persian; fourth, the Hindu; fifth, the Chinese, and sixth, the Buddhist. Each one of these arrays itself in relation to the standard of a book, or collection of books. The first looks to the Bible; the second, to a sacred canon of which only one book, the so-called Book of the dead, is now extant, but of the import of which something is also to be learned from

existing monuments; the third to the Avesta; the fourth to the Veda; the fifth to the collection of books called King; and the sixth to the Tripitaka. All are still existing as religions except the Egyptian, and many of its elements survive under other names.

Upon further examination, we find that they all belong to four heads. The Avesta, although very ancient, is demonstrably an off-shoot from the religion of the Veda, and must be subordinated to that head. Buddhism stands similarly related to later Brahmanism, a protest against it, being the product of an attempt at rational reform. The Veda is of original antiquity in relation to both Avesta and Tripitaka; and the Rig-Veda in relation to all the other Vedas. In the direction from which it comes, there is no extant literary production beyond the Rig-Veda.

Among the classics of China we have to make a similar distinction. Those written by Confucius and his followers must be set apart from those upon which he expended merely editorial care. This principle will also exclude the Tau-teh-king of the old philosopher, Lau-tse, as well as the additions allowed to have been made by Confucius, to some which he edited. It will leave us only the Yih-king, the Shoo-king and the She-king, among which, the first in historic importance is the Shoo-king. Nothing in Chinese literature antedates the period from which its narrative comes down.

Genesis, not only by its place in the arrangement of the canon, which, being from ancient time, is not of small weight, but by its intrinsic relations to the other Hebrew books, is demonstrably the oldest. Not one in

all the canon can be, consistently with its features as a book, assigned to a prior antiquity of authorship. Nor is any Egyptian writing more ancient than the inscriptions upon the monuments in the cemetery of Memphis, and those of the twelfth dynasty in Thebes.

Thus setting aside all the later and secondary, and for the present, also the imperfectly deciphered Babylonian-Assyrian, and the later Assyrian, for the reason that it is later, we find the extant books of fundamental authority in the religions of the world are Genesis, the Rig-Veda, the Shoo-King, and as much as can be learned on the subject from the most ancient monuments of Egypt and her remaining sacred book. There is no historical authority beyond the antiquity of these: I do not mean beyond the subjects of which they treat, but beyond themselves. They belong to the three great seats of the world's civilization. To ascertain the doctrines taught in them, is to ascertain the earliest religion which has left any record of itself. And in following up that inquiry, nothing has interested—not to say surprised me more than the extent of their substantial similarity.

They all agree in conceiving of a Supreme ruler of heaven and earth, who is personal and spiritual, resident in heaven, but also, everywhere present, who is almighty, wise and holy, severely just, but also kind and beneficient to men and hears their petitions when they worship him aright.

In Genesis, the oneness of God is distinctly held up without division of person. Other divine beings are mentioned as angels, with belief, but not with worship.

In the Shoo-King, there is quite as positively only one God; but the spirits mentioned are also objects of worship. In the Vedic hymns, the attributes of divine monarchy are of frequent occurrence, the thoughts of the worshipper are formed upon the idea of one almighty sovereign, but Deity is conceived of as existing in different persons, who are entirely separate, and the spiritual agency is exalted excessively by the poetic imagination.

All three authorities agree in regarding man as sinful, as being so constituted that he will sin, and as inheriting guilt, and as justly liable to punishment: they imply that man must be delivered from his sins in order to be acceptable with God, or to receive any favor at his hands.

They all contain confession of sin with supplication and prayer.

All record and teach the practice of sacrifice.

And sacrifice, in all three alike, is offered by the head of the household for himself and the family, of which he is the head, or by the King for the nation. The worship is, in all three, patriarchal.

The men, whose those religions were, expected the highest blessedness in the favor of God; but their hopes of a future state are not expressed with much clearness.

On all these points, the Egyptian monuments prior to the end of the twelfth dynasty, as far as their testimony has been gathered, substantially coincide. They abundantly and strongly maintain the divine monarchy, but the number of persons in godhead is multiplied

into a practical polytheism, and the representations of them to a real idolatry. Respecting man as sinful, as needing pardon and the divine favor in order to prosperity in life, or preparation for death, the practice of sacrifice and prayer, the expectation of blessedness from a life of virtue, or of piety, they agree with the books. And as to belief in a life to come their testimony is more distinct and full.

The state of society, in which these writings were produced, was, in one case, pastoral; in another, agricultural; in a third, agricultural, manufacturing and commercial, and in a fourth, pastoral and predatory; that is, of every general class of civilized industry and of some occupations but partially civilized, but in all it was of the patriarchal type.

The great features in which Genesis differs from the rest is, first, its pure and simple historical manner, continued with sobriety throughout: a contrast to the disjointed, and stilted fragments of the Chinese, the luxuriantly figurative poetry of the Veda and the scattered monuments of Egypt: second, the distinction, which it draws, broad and deep between the people of God and the world; and third, in that singular promise, which pervades it, giving an exalted supernatural tone to its narrative, and breathing, as the spirit of a higher life and of progress, through it from beginning to end.

In these testimonies we have the oldest on the subject of religion which it is likely we shall ever obtain. They exhibit it as it existed in their several countries between fifteen hundred and two thousand years before Christ; that some of them also ascend to a higher, or

come down to a later date, need not be at present urged. All subsequent religions, as far as historical, branch off in one direction or another, some by progressive development of incipient error, others by protest against error, but all from these.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MORE DISTANT ANTIQUITY.

On the foundation constituted by these documents and the positive facts, which they present, could we plant our telescope, and turn it upon the antiquity which preceded them, is it likely that anything might be learned? It seems so. They all presume that their doctrines are old, that they have been from ancient time the faith of their people, and that their ordinances are so well established as to need neither apology nor explanation. Both doctrines and ordinances are held up as those of their forefathers. And this occurring, as it does, in all the other testimonies, as well as in Genesis prior to the call of Abraham, gives additional weight to the foregoing consistent narrative of that book.

It thus appears that in the antiquity preceding these books, and within the countries, to which they respectively pertain, religion was, in the main, the same as that which they present.

This determines nothing as to the greatness of that prior antiquity, but simply that at the earliest date of the existence of these books, the people, whose they were, believed the religion they contain to be old. Neither is it meant that some changes in presentation

of doctrine and form of worship may not have previously passed upon it, in coming down to them from its origin; because we find that, in later times, religion has gone through such changes imperceptibly to its believers. But the import is, that there is no trace of a revolution, or break in the preceding course of religious history or development.

The subsequent history of religion, in all those countries, exhibits a progress either of development, or by revolution, or both.

Development, in all cases, tended to sacerdotalism, ritualism, polytheism and idolatry. The progress can be demonstrated at successive stages. In the Rig-Veda, all these elements are less developed than in the later Vedas, and less in the later Vedas than in the subsequent sacred books. As the stream of the history descends, the ceremonial, and all that belongs to it, magnifies progressively, until it reaches the maturity of Brahmanism. So in Palestine, the idolatry of the Canaanites increases from the days of Abraham to those of Joshua; in Egypt from the simpler religion of the pyramid-builders to that complex and base idolatry, which drew forth the contempt of even heathen Rome. In China, the progressive corruption of the national religion, notwithstanding the reform effected for a time, by Confucius, has been such that the name and idea of the ruler of heaven and earth are sunk in a mass of idolatry, and the great rationalist philosopher himself is worshipped with divine honors.

Exceptions to this tendency are to be found only in the checks and alterations effected by revolution aiming

at reform. And reformation went always in one of three directions; either to return to what was deemed the most ancient; or to follow what either was or professed to be a new revelation; or to fall back upon some effort of the reason.

Where reform professed to return to the most ancient, it invariably set up the simplest form of religion; as in the revival of the old Chinese by Confucius, in which revelation was not claimed, but human reason stayed itself upon the support of the primitive books. Revelation as made to Abraham was added to a revival of the more ancient. The patriarch was first recalled from the errors increasing around him and in his father's house, to the simpler belief and practice of Noachic worship. And the reformation made by Zarathustra, for which he claimed the weight of revelation, aimed at the same end of simplicity of faith and observance. The Buddhist reform, a singular combination of the rational and mythical, was expressly designed to overthrow all the despotic sacerdotalism of the Brahmans. That of which Moses was the leader is apparently inconsistent. It returned from the polytheistic idolatry of Egypt to the worship of one spiritual God; and yet constituted a symbolical ceremonial and a priestly class. But, in the progress of that series of events to which it belongs, it comes out that the Mosaic institution was only the first step in that reform—the most majestic of all reforms—which it took hundreds of years to effect, and which, when effected, proved more emphatically monotheistic, anti-ceremonial and anti-sacerdotal than any that preceded it. And the reformations undertaken by natural

means, and professing to return to primitive revelation, have all, from that of Darius to that of Mohammed, rejected the polytheism, the hierarchy, the ritualism of their respective connections.

In all this we must distinguish between the religious revolution and mere philosophical, or theosophical speculation, although they may be sometimes combined. Because the philosophical speculation, which grows up within the bosom of an old and well-established religion, is more daring in theories foreign to the common mind, than are the doctrines whereby a reformatory revolution in religion is effected. The latter are always simple in character and presentation, no matter what mystery and solemnity may be thrown around their origin. Even Buddhism, in the teaching of its founder, labored to be simple, plain, and practical. Its soaring speculations are the work of its later teachers. The most daring theosophic theories are not to be found in the Veda, but in the later Brahmanical books; not in the canonical Hebrew, but in its Rabbinical expounders. The monotheism of these secure and recondite theologians is often pantheistic; not so that of the earlier time, nor that of the great religious reforms. Pantheism is a later production—a production of philosophy, which may arise under the doctrine of an everywhere present Supreme Being, but first appears in history in the defence or explanation of a multiplied polytheism.

The greatest corruptions in religion are not produced by revolution, but by gradual development, insidious and secure. The bearing of the history of national religion, in as far as it consists of uninterrupted deve-

lopment, is, without exception, from simple to complex, from intellectual to formal, and thence to idolatrous.

And in the religions which grew out of reformation, the same tendency was manifested after they had been established in security. The Avestan hymns were followed up by multiplication of liturgical forms, and ceremonial prescriptions, of which the later books of the Avesta mainly consist; and the simple asceticism of Buddha was early matured into an elaborate system of monastic order and idolatrous observances.

Now reverse the order; and instead of following the path downward from our starting-point, let us follow it up, in the line of the same bearing, and it is plain that we must be conducted into a preceding past, where either a simpler religion than that of the witnesses was observed, or the same: certainly not to a grosser, or more complex. That last, the logic of the case utterly forbids.

Following truly the bearing of the history, the religion prior to the existence of our earliest witnesses must have been either the same which they present, or more simple and pure.

But there is some diversity in the date to which these oldest witnesses testify; and the oldest exhibit religion in the simplest form. It is, accordingly, reasonable to believe that following Brahmanical history up through the Veda, if we could go beyond the Veda to antiquity as distant as that recorded in the Shoo-king, we might come to a state of religion as simple as that of the earliest part of the Chinese classic; and if, following the same straight but converging lines through both Shoo-

king and Hindu creed, we could ascend to the pre-Abrahamic date recorded in Genesis, we should expect to find a religion as simple and pure as Genesis presents at that period.

In connection with this it is to be remarked, that the fundamental elements of religion are the same in all the ancient records we possess; and the further into antiquity the history is pursued, the more does that in which they differ diminish. Consequently, the reasonable presumption is that if we could follow them all up through their history, we should find in each of them a period, when it coincided entirely with what was taught in some part of their prior antiquity by each of all the others.

To follow up any of the religions thus represented, in the true line of their subsequent history, must certainly land us in a creed recognizing only one God, with the attributes which these witnesses agree in teaching, a worship of simple patriarchal sacrifice and prayer, and belief in the favor of a personal and merciful God thereby. And, secondly, by the same process we must come to the conclusion that the primitive religion in each of these cases, was identical with that in all the rest.

The only one of these books, which professes to bring its narrative down from the beginning of all religion, actually gives precisely that account of it. In all of them, reference to the earlier antiquity is generally in the tone of admiration of some men for great moral excellence and living near to God. Wickedness is also mentioned and the conflict of good and evil, but never

so as to imply that the more ancient religious character was not the purer.

In thus adducing the testimony of the book of Genesis together with that of the Shoo-King and of the ancient Vedic and Avestan hymns, I would not be understood as putting it upon the same level with them; but because I esteem it more highly as a religious book, I certainly do not rank it beneath them as a source of history. If they are to be taken, as they must be, for authorities touching the religion of their respective times and nations, it is as truly to be accepted for the period and people to which it pertains. And the interesting fact, educed by comparison of them, is the sameness of the original creed of all mankind—the most gratifying assurance that our race, for many ages in the early time, as a whole, worshipped the true God of revelation, in the way of his appointment, and held the fundamental doctrines of sin and redemption.

Men were not all cast off from the beginning, except a particular family, and left to grope their way to as much of truth as they could find; but, on the contrary, were all alike put on the footing of the same revelation. The primitive dispensation of divine mercy was one addressed to all mankind. That first way of God's dealing with fallen man, in which the king, priest, and prophet were one, and in which Melchizedek was conspicuous, if he was not also the last to observe it in its purity, was limited to no specially favored few, but addressed itself equally to all. How long it was retained by the different nations correctly we cannot

say, but certainly in all its proper features, in some quarters, until the days of the Hebrew patriarchs. To their families was confined the first change divinely introduced. Beyond their families the same method continued. And even the corruption which fell upon it, during the succeeding two or three hundred years, was perhaps not greater than that which befell the Christian church in the dark ages of European history. And if, as we feel assured there was, even in the depths of mediæval degeneracy, still enough of truth remaining in the observances and instructions of the church to save the soul which apprehended it in faith, is it extravagant to believe that God had his true people among those who worshipped him according to the matter and after the manner of the old economy, while the old economy was in force, although they were not of the family of Abraham, and may have mingled the original truth with some ingredients of error?

God has never, at any period, left the world without a proclamation of his mercy,—has never suffered it to lose all knowledge of himself. The old Noachic instruction was not forgotten or abandoned before the Abrahamic was instituted. While the former still retained the life-giving power, the latter was formed to prepare for the evil days, which were coming in the sequel of the error already working. As Christ did not delay his coming until Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and the Mosaic system utterly abolished, so the Abrahamic dispensation was opened while the preceding was still in force. God has never left any dispensation so far to the effects of corrupting causes

as to completely submerge all its saving truth, before setting on foot an efficient means of reforming it. Corrupt as was the Jewish church at the coming of the Lord, it still contained the means of salvation. There were still Elizabeths, and Annas, and Simeons to welcome him when he came. And low as the idolatry, to which the mediæval church descended, it still carried its sacred message to the hearts of some: and all were not lost, who clung to its forms, after steps had been taken in reformation. So, in the primitive period, we feel constrained to believe that God may have had his people among every branch of mankind; and that, even when much error had obscured the truth, there may still have been some, who saw in the forms of worship their spiritual meaning, and received its message in their hearts.

By what date corruption had progressed so far as entirely to leave out, or defeat all such truth, it is perhaps impossible to determine, — ancient heathenism seems to have reached that degree,— but in the pre-Mosaic time we may be free to believe that multitudes were saved for God out of every land and nation, in accordance with the old Noachic covenant; that God had then his people among the sons of Japhet and of Ham, as well as of Shem,—on the plains of China, among the uplands of Iran and of Assyria, as well as in Mesopotamia and the land of Canaan. And it is pleasant to believe that the early message of salvation may have been carried, in many a heart and on many a tongue, long and far, among nomadic tribes, on their protracted migrations. Corruption, in some countries earlier and

some later, but in every historical case to greater or less degree, built up her complication of falsehoods, and all upon the basis of the same ancient creed.

Heathenism seems to be the degeneracy, in various ways and degrees, of one primitive religion, and is related to the ancient dispensations, recorded in the Hebrew scriptures, as mediæval Christianity to the Gospel.